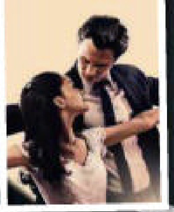
BBC **SCHUBERT'S WINTERREISE**
Baritone Benjamin Appl sets out on music's bleakest journey



WEST SIDE STORY
We salute Spielberg's stunning new film

music

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BBC RADIO 3
Full January listings inside
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The power of Grieg

LISE DAVIDSEN

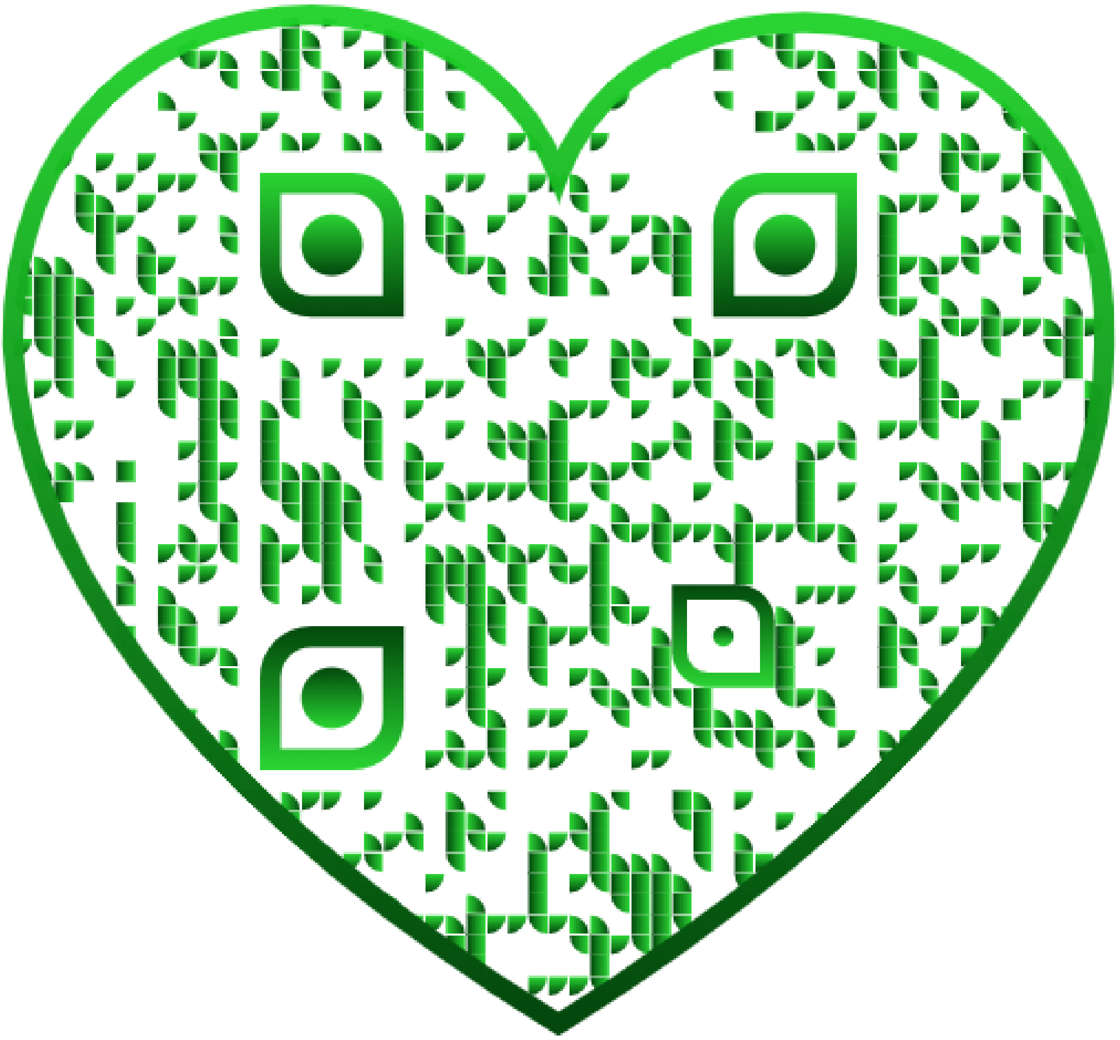
The Norwegian soprano on the irresistible allure of songs from home

Alexander Scriabin
Was he really Russian music's great eccentric?

Erwin Schulhoff
The tragic story of the jazz-loving Czech composer

Also in this issue!
Ethel Smyth's suffragette anthem
Sustainable instruments
Jaime Martín
Bibliotapes
The Mozartists
and much more...

100 reviews by the world's finest critics
Recordings & books – see p64



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Welcome

One of the many pleasures of working on the *BBC Music Magazine* editorial desk is how, in the course of doing the job, one is constantly learning new facts and discovering pieces, or even composers in general, that have somehow escaped the attention. Even after more than 17 years here, the discoveries continue to come thick and fast – in the last couple of weeks alone, I have become smitten with Ethel Smyth's Mass in D, Penderecki's *Winterreise* (see p23) and, above all, the Suite for Chamber Orchestra by the ill-fated Schulhoff.

When a composer dies in terrible circumstances, there's always the temptation with hindsight to let that colour one's perception of their life and music as a whole and paint them as a tragic figure from the outset. But as Simon Broughton points out in *Composer of the Month* on p56, Schulhoff, in contrast, enjoyed quite a wild and wonderful – and successful – existence in his early years, resulting in music that is carefree, witty and hugely inventive. Interestingly, as his political outlook then altered and the world around him grew increasingly hostile, so did the character of his music. He is a fascinating figure.

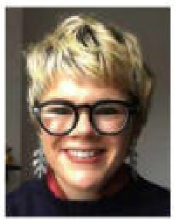
As we move into the new year, I look forward to adding further discoveries to my regular listening repertoire. Not, of course, that I plan to ditch old favourites to make room for them. I'll just have to find more hours in the day...

Jeremy Pound *Acting Editor*

THIS MONTH'S CONTRIBUTORS

Daniel Jaffé
Russian music expert
'How did one of Russia's greatest composers become known as a delusional madman? The answer, I think, is really rather shocking – but I hope it will restore to Scriabin some long-overdue respect.' ***Page 36***

Michael Beek
Reviews editor, BBC Music
'I'm a big fan of *West Side Story* and director Steven Spielberg, so it was a thrill to have those two passions come together on screen. Speaking to David Newman about his work on that legendary music was a joy.' ***Page 44***



Freya Parr
Staff writer, BBC Music
'With no glitzy website or glamorous PR team, Bibliotapes is one of the most hard-to-reach record labels. It made the chase for information all the more thrilling – and forced this millennial to pick up the phone!' ***Page 50***

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BBC RADIO 3

January Radio 3 and TV listings *See p98*

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Plus our dream composer-and-book soundtrack pairing (see p50)
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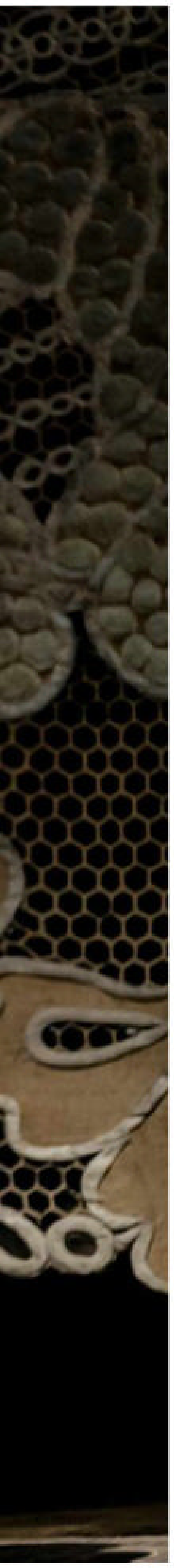

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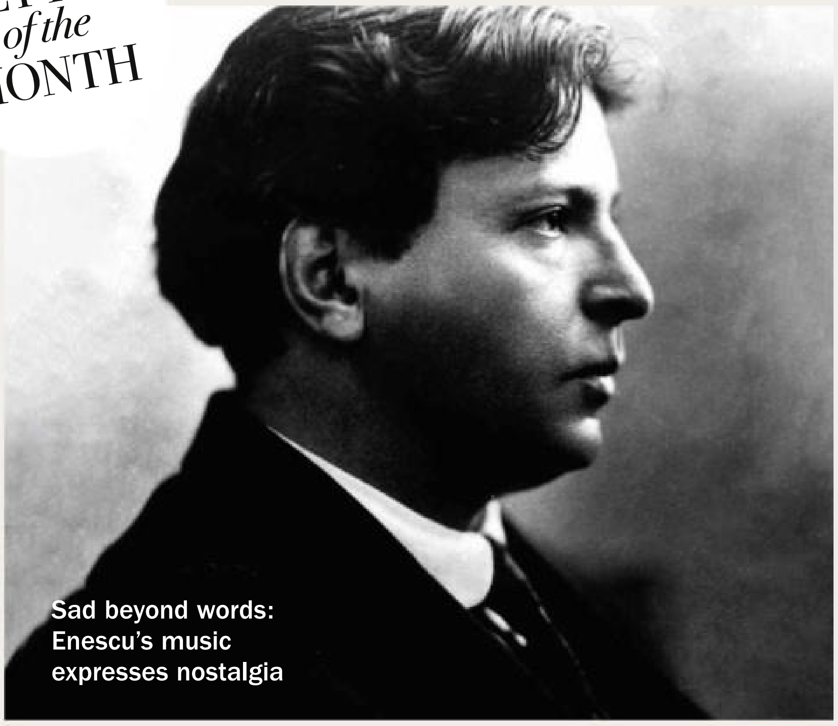
LETTER *of the* MONTH


Sad beyond words: Enescu's music expresses nostalgia

GETTY

Romanian reflections

In response to your *It'll end in tears...* feature (December), it is easier to make music more emotional when accompanied by words – a piece such as Violetta's death scene in Verdi's *La traviata*, always likely to bring tears to an audience, is much more than just the music. It is more difficult to achieve deep emotion from music on its own. Such a piece that I feel brings intense sadness is Enescu's *Second Romanian Rhapsody*. This and his *First Rhapsody* were written while he was in Paris. They both conjure up a feeling of nostalgia as if the composer felt he might never see his native land again; but while the First looks back on happy memories, the Second has such an air of desolation in its heart-felt melodies that it is almost impossible to listen to without sharing in that emotion. It is permeated with an air of sadness, and even the final dance is fleeting and seen from a distance.
***Graeme Jeal,** Enfield*

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Wild Cardus

I enjoyed Andrew Green's celebration of the double life of Neville Cardus in music and cricket (December). Occasionally Cardus could combine his interests, writing that in Sir Thomas Beecham's conducting he 'achieved the best square-cut since [Charlie] Macartney retired. But he should try to get nearer to the ball, and over it, while making his leg-glance.'

He had a sense of mischief, which could make him a difficult man at times, and occasionally his tricks would get him into trouble. On one occasion, he was due to report on a concert in Yorkshire and, as he often would, he drafted the review in advance based on his knowledge of the work and the performers. He didn't travel to the concert as the weather was bad. *The Manchester Guardian* didn't appreciate receiving a review for a concert that was, in fact, cancelled, and sacked him. He was soon reinstated!
***Christopher O'Brien,** Author of 'Cardus Uncovered'*

Prophetic review

I very much enjoyed the article on Neville Cardus. My principal memory of Cardus as a music critic is his championing of Mahler's music at a time when it was unfashionable to do so. I particularly recall a review of his where he compared a sparsely attended performance of Mahler's Sixth Symphony by Norman del Mar with a packed -out audience for Herbert von Karajan's performance of Brahms's Third Symphony and finding the Mahler a more personally involving experience, musically and emotionally. It was probably a somewhat provocative view at the time, but it has turned out to be prophetic.
***Neil Sinyard,** Saxby All Saints*

More Gipps, please

The BBC has been doing outstanding work over the past few years in promoting the work of shamefully neglected women composers. The edition of *Composer of the Week* on Radio 3 devoted to Ruth Gipps in the summer was truly revelatory, and was followed up by an excellent article by Leah Broad in your August issue. Yet where are the record companies in this enlightened campaign? A survey of the past year's new releases reveals depressingly few new recordings of works by women composers. To take Gipps as an example, the recent release by Somm of a CD of her clarinet chamber music has literally doubled the number of her compositions available as recordings. Somm is to be applauded, both for this disc, and for its earlier one of Gipps's Piano Concerto. Otherwise, the pickings are meagre.
***Jonathan Tubb,** Walthamstow*

Moor's the pity

I am easily brought to tears by music (see also *Letter of the Month*, left), and I find Act IV of Verdi's *Otello* especially moving. First we hear the sheer beauty of Desdemona's Ave Maria, and then the pathos of the opera's final moments as Otello, full of remorse, steals a final kiss. The sheer beauty of Verdi's music and the poignancy of Shakespeare's story combine to propel our senses into an explosion of emotion and unavoidable tears. *Otello* was my first opera experience: a performance, I believe, in 1964 by the Royal Opera on tour at the then Palace Theatre in Manchester. I went to Covent Garden in 1965 to hear it again. The Desdemona was sung by Joan Carlyle, so it was especially sad for me to learn of her recent death (see p21). Her magical silver-toned voice gave huge pleasure to countless thousands of opera lovers.
***John Greenway,** London W4*

Maritime misery

The scene that gets me every time is the end of Britten's *Peter Grimes*, when Captain Balstrode says to Grimes: 'Sail out till you lose sight of land, then sink the boat. D'you hear? Sink her!', as Ellen Orford looks away in anguish. I saw it at Covent Garden in 1981 with Norman Bailey, Heather Harper and Jon Vickers.
***Barry Valentine,** County Down*

From sorrow...

For me the saddest moment in music is the Cavatina from Beethoven's String Quartet Op. 130. The instruction *Beklemmt* (Oppressed), which the virtually stone-deaf Beethoven wrote above the short passage in the middle of the movement, plunges us into outright despair. We weep with him and for him. Indeed, he was reported to have said that he wrote the piece with tears in his eyes. You can hear his sobs, his grief in those few bars. No composer has produced such profoundly moving music under such duress.
***David Aylwin,** via email*

...to joy

Richard Morrison's December opinion piece about the power of music to impact our emotions and the feature on music that make critics cry both had an extra resonance for me, as I have regained my hearing after eight months of being functionally deaf. My reaction to music has become far stronger for its absence in my life over the bulk of this year. Yes, I could listen to music through the computer on my headphones, but for many reasons that was a mere shadow of the experience I had when listening to music on CD once my hearing was sorted out. I was on the verge of tears when listening to my first CD, not because of the music itself, beautiful though it was, but because I could once again hear the tracks with clarity and the ability to spot the nuances of the music. I had, as you can imagine, quite a backlog of music to get through, including eight months of *BBC Music Magazine* CDs! The beauty of Dvořák's Fifth Symphony and the power of the Stravinsky ballet scores both left me awestruck as I appreciated anew the impact of the music.
***David Pearce,** Rainham*

The Acting editor replies: We have had a wonderful array of letters in response to our *It'll end in tears...* feature. It is nice to be able to round off the correspondence on this subject on such a positive note!

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BBC music MAGAZINE

The *full* score

Our pick of the month's news, views and interviews

Mark Elder is appointed to prestigious Bergen post

Renowned maestro set to be reunited with 'old friend' Edward Gardner in Norway

Elder statesman: Sir Mark will begin his Bergen post conducting (right) Frederick Delius

JAMES CHEADLE, GETTY

The Bergen Philharmonic Orchestra has announced that Sir Mark Elder is to be its new principal guest conductor. Elder, 74, will begin his new post on the west coast of Norway in autumn 2022, when he conducts Delius's Nietzsche-inspired *Mass of Life*, and has signed up with the orchestra until at least July 2025. He is scheduled to conduct three or four programmes each season.

In Bergen, Elder will be joining an old friend, Edward Gardner, the orchestra's chief conductor. Not only do the pair go back a long way – Gardner was Elder's assistant conductor at the Hallé at the very start of his career – but they also have much in common, not least as former music directors of English National Opera and as renowned experts of English orchestral and choral music.

> 'Elder is a unique and distinctive man of wisdom and great experience'

The choice of opening concert repertoire, meanwhile, also comes with an appropriate link – not only was the Bradford-born Delius highly influenced by Norwegian culture, he was well acquainted with Bergen and its most famous son, Grieg, who was briefly chief conductor of the Bergen Philharmonic.

The orchestra itself is one of the oldest and most distinguished in Europe, having been founded (under the name of 'The Musical Society') back in 1765. As well as Grieg, a number of leading composers have conducted it in their own music, including Sibelius, Nielsen and Copland. In 1953, the orchestra launched the annual Bergen Festival, which is still going strong today, and in 1978 moved into the city's new Grieghallen concert hall.

Sir Mark, meanwhile, has effectively lived up to his name, having established himself as something of an elder musical statesman. As music director of the Hallé since 1999, he has taken the Manchester orchestra from strength to strength over his 22 years in charge, while also working wonders in a wide range of repertoire as guest conductor elsewhere and in the opera house. He has conducted the Last Night of the Proms twice.

'This is a unique opportunity for us to gain a true Nestor, a man of wisdom and great experience, and a grand maestro in British musical life,' says Bernt Bauge, the Bergen Philharmonic's CEO. 'Sir Mark Elder is loved by the musicians in the Bergen Philharmonic Orchestra, and they are looking with joy to a close collaboration with this unique and distinctive artistic personality.'

Life's a beach as Lewisham welcomes the sand of music

Forget the Med, or even Brighton, Blackpool or Bournemouth. From 23 June to 10 July, musical beach-lovers will want to head to Lewisham! Yes, really. Admittedly, the Albany may be some way from the ocean waves, but the South-East London venue will stage the UK premiere of *Sun and Sea* (above), an opera by Lithuanian composer Lina Lapelytė that was first performed at the 2019 Venice Biennale, where its all-female creative team was awarded the Golden Lion. Unfolding over several hours, the opera's action depicts an afternoon at the beach. Beyond the sandy fun, however, lies a darker environmental message. Mark your diary and pack your trunks, bucket and spade.

THE MONTH IN NUMBERS

24

… consecutive hours of drumming by BBC weatherman Owain Wyn Evans (pictured above), raising more than £3m for Children in Need

10,000,000

… dollars anonymously donated to the Handel and Haydn Society in honour of conductor Harry Christophers

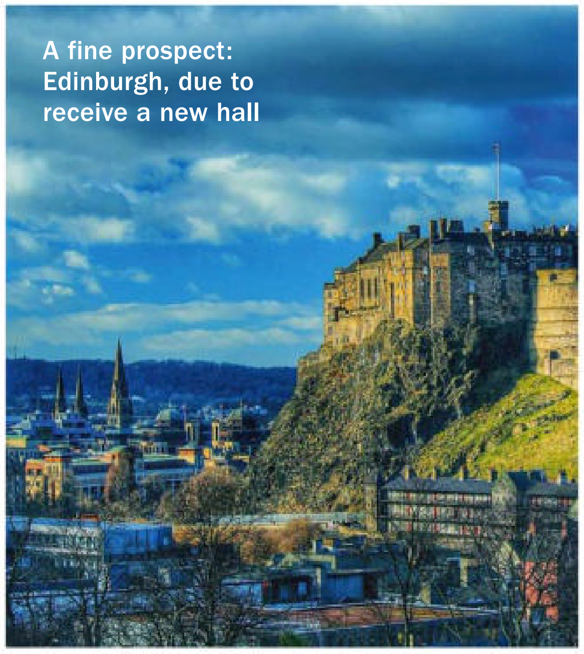
10

… centimetres, the length of a miniature violin played by luthier Maria Sandner on *Got Talent España*

83

… per cent of professional musicians in the UK say they are still unable to return to full-time work due to the pandemic

Sound Bites


A fine prospect: Edinburgh, due to receive a new hall

Capital venture

Edinburgh is to get a new concert hall. Plans have been approved for work to begin on the Dunard Centre, a 1,000-seat venue just off St Andrew Square in the city centre. Projected to cost around £75m and be complete by 2026, the hall will provide a home base for the Scottish Chamber Orchestra and will be an important venue for the Edinburgh Festival.

Welcome guest

Anything Bergen can do (see p12), so can Bournemouth. Mark Wigglesworth has joined the Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra as its principal guest conductor, beginning with immediate effect. Like Mark Elder, Wigglesworth is a former music director of English National Opera (albeit briefly) and comes with a wealth of experience and acclaim. His initial tenure is for a period of three years.

Green recordings

The first ever recording studio dedicated to carbon capture has been set up in Gloucestershire. Based at Cotehay Farm in Brockhampton, Migration Studios will channel all of its proceeds to the environmental charity Platform Earth, which in turn aims to support projects that tackle climate change. The first of such projects to benefit from the new enterprise will be the Sussex Kelp Restoration Project. *See also 'Sustainable Sounds', p40.*

Squeeze box of delights

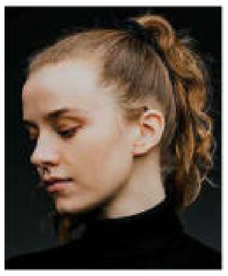
Congratulations to accordionist Ryan Corbett, who has won the prestigious Royal Over-Seas League (ROSL) Annual Music Competition. Corbett squeezed his way to a £20,000 first prize with a recital that included composers ranging from Vivaldi to Russian accordion guru Viacheslav Semoinov. He is the first accordionist to win the competition since 1993.

ELON SCHENHOLZ, BBC, GETTY

Rising Stars

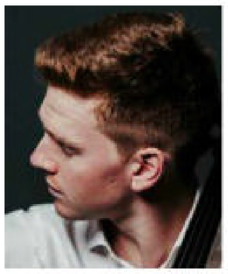
Three to look out for...

Elisabeth Brauss *Pianist*



Born: Hanover, Germany
Career highlight: Being in the BBC Radio 3 New Generation Artists scheme has been one of the most rewarding experiences of my musical life. It has offered me great opportunities and practical support.
Musical hero: Conductor Carlos Kleiber is one of my greatest inspirations. Just by watching his performances, I feel I am becoming a better musician.
Dream concert: The greatest moments on stage often happen when you least expect them. That said, it would be a dream to play Mozart's Concerto for Two Pianos together with pianist Igor Levit under the baton of Teodor Currentzis.

Benjamin Kruithof *Cellist*

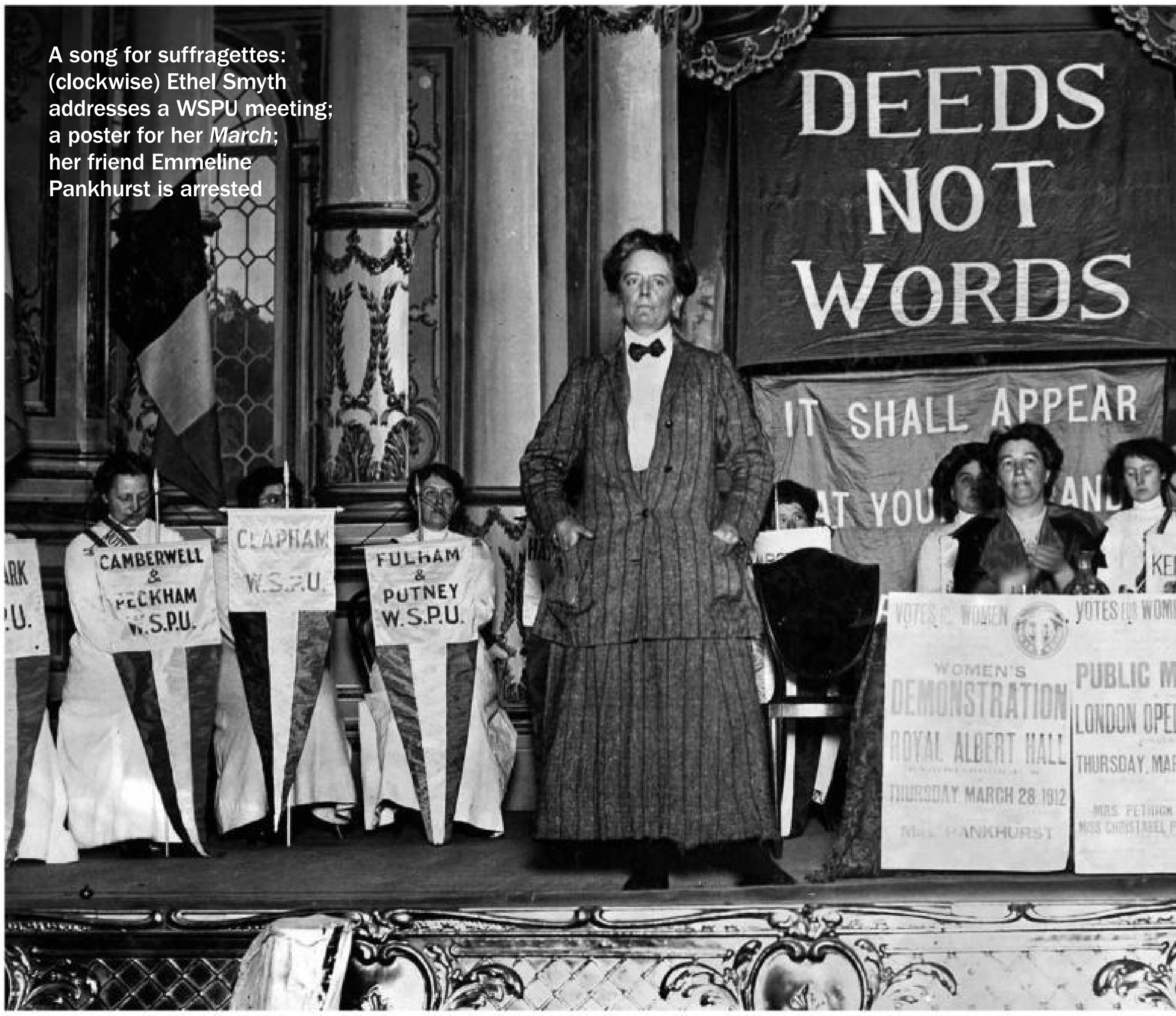


Born: Moestroff, Luxembourg
Career highlight: Producing my debut album, *Russian Mood*, helped me grow as a musician because of the difficult programme I chose. Also, winning the Cello Biennale competition in Amsterdam in 2020, which gave me my debut with the Netherlands Philharmonic in the Concertgebouw.
Musical hero: Pianist Glenn Gould was dedicated to finding his own individual sound. It's so easy to lose our individual ideas and instead mimic the recordings we enjoy.
Dream concert: I would love to play chamber music in a fantastic hall surrounded by friends and family.

Cevanne Horrocks-Hopayian *Composer*

Born: Suffolk, UK
Career highlight: Performing my compositions at the 2019 BBC Proms with the Sonic Bonnet, a DIY midi-controller I wear as an ornate headdress of metal and LED lights. Using this wearable tech, I can manipulate my live vocals.
Musical hero: Laurie Anderson, who describes herself as a multimedia artist. Her works, whether for the Kronos Quartet or NASA, offer insight, heart and humour.
Dream concert: I dreamt of an orchestra playing, shimmering blue and green in the darkness, like the earth from space. I awoke and immediately forgot the sound, but with every piece I write, I try and recapture it.

TIMEPIECE This month in history



A song for suffragettes: (clockwise) Ethel Smyth addresses a WSPU meeting; a poster for her *March*; her friend Emmeline Pankhurst is arrested

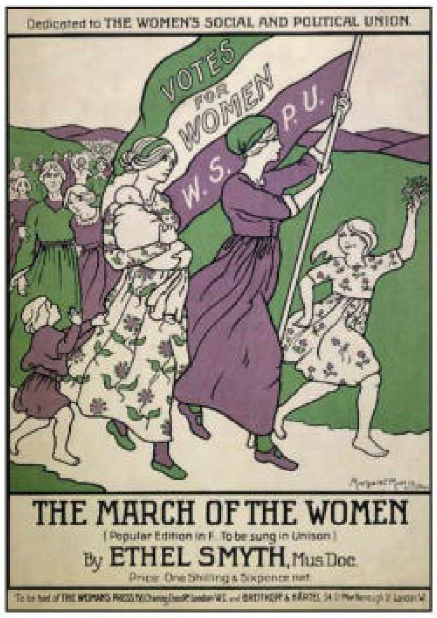
ALAMY, GETTY, SIMON HOEFELE, JODIE CARTMAN

JANUARY 1911

Ethel Smyth raises women's voices to demand the vote

Clad in purple and white brocade doctoral robes, on 21 January 1911 the composer Ethel Smyth stepped onto the Royal Albert Hall stage. She lifted her conducting baton to an overwhelming roar and the applause of thousands of suffragettes who had gathered to hear the world premiere her *March of the Women.* It's a simple tune: joyful, in a major key, the lyrics encouraging women to 'Shout, shout, up with your song', and to 'Laugh in hope for sure is the end'. From the moment it was first performed, her *March* became the official anthem of women's suffrage. It was sung across the world, in homes and halls, on streets and on the steps of the United States Capitol.

By 1911, women's suffrage was headline news in Britain. Frustrated by the lack of progress made by years of peaceful petitioning for women's votes throughout the Victorian era, in 1903 Emmeline Pankhurst and her daughters, Christabel and Sylvia, founded the Women's Social and Political Union, adopting a militant policy deliberately to court arrest. Escalating from spitting at policemen to smashing windows, the WSPU's members embraced the use of militant strategies to keep women's suffrage on the front pages of British newspapers.



But the WSPU also used less inflammatory means to raise awareness for the campaign. Theatricality was crucial to their identity, and the Pankhursts led enormous rallies of tens of thousands of women through London, clad in the WSPU colours of white, purple, and green. Musicians were among those who marched: in the 1908 rally at Hyde Park, the cellist May Mukle led the musician's section within the 500,000-strong group.

Music was an important part of these rallies — the suffragettes wanted to be heard as much as seen. But until Smyth's *March*, no music had been written specifically for the WSPU. They had put new lyrics to well-known tunes like 'Onward Christian Soldiers' and the *Marseillaise*. Smyth's *March* gave the WSPU its own voice. 'The song has in it all the spirit of the Women's Movement,' the *Votes for Women* newspaper enthused; 'the tenderness, the hope, the faith, and the cheerful and triumphant thrill of victory.' From 1911 onwards, suffragettes were instructed to learn Smyth's song by heart so it could be sung at all WSPU events.

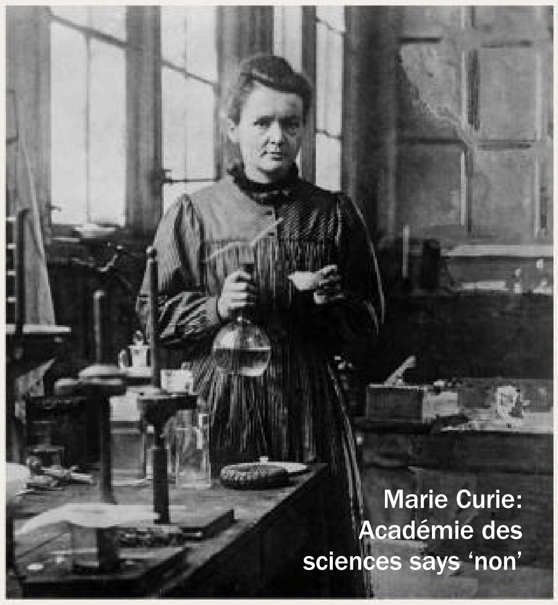
Emmeline Pankhurst was at Smyth's side in the Royal Albert Hall at the song's unveiling, telling the gathered women that 'no one could feel as deeply as I do the gratitude for her services to the women's cause that I so feebly express tonight'. Two months later, they would stand together again on the same spot, for Emmeline to present Smyth with a ceremonial gold baton in thanks for her music. Over the two years that Smyth dedicated to suffrage, she and Emmeline would become an inseparable unit.

Smyth was certainly among Emmeline's closest friends – there is speculation that they might have been

Suffragettes were instructed to learn Smyth's song by heart for all WSPU events

lovers – and she thought Emmeline 'an even more astounding figure than Joan of Arc'. They were imprisoned together at Holloway in 1912. When Thomas Beecham came to visit Smyth there, he witnessed her directing a rousing rendition of the *March* from her cell window, conducting fellow suffragettes in the yard outside with a toothbrush. Beecham commented that if sending Smyth to prison was intended to encourage her to reflect and repent, she 'neither reflected nor repented'.

The *March* was not the only suffrage-inspired music Smyth would write. Her comic opera *The Boatswain's Mate* – her most popular opera during her lifetime – is explicitly pro-women's rights, quoting her *March* in the Overture. She also wove the WSPU into her music in more subtle ways. Her String Quartet in E minor, finished in 1912, on the surface has nothing to do with the WSPU – but Smyth wrote to Emmeline that if the last movement 'is anything it is... "Suffragette"!' It was an identity Smyth had first made public in January 1911, when her explicitly political music affirmed women's right to be heard.


Marie Curie: Académie des sciences says 'non'

Also in January 1911

7th: The first officially recorded **downhill skiing race** takes place in Crans-Montana, Switzerland. Organised by Sir Arnold Lunn, the race is contested by 11 skiers, who have spent more than six hours climbing the mountain the previous day so that they can come down it at speed. First over the finishing line, in a time of 61 minutes, is Cecil Hopkinson, who is awarded the Roberts of Kandahar Challenge Cup.

13th: Rembrandt's *Militia Company of District II under the Command of Captain Frans Banninck Cocq,* better known as **The Nightwatch**, is attacked with a knife by an unemployed navy cook as it hangs in Amsterdam's Rijksmuseum. The 1642 painting survives relatively unscathed as the would-be vandal fails to cut through its varnish.

23rd: Eight years after winning the Nobel Prize in Physics for her work on isolating radium, **Marie Curie** unsuccessfully applies to become the first female member of France's Académie des sciences. One Académie member, Émile Hilaire Amagat, explains that 'Women cannot be part of the Institute of France'. Curie later wins another Nobel Prize, this time for chemistry.

26th: Richard Strauss's *Der Rosenkavalier* is premiered at the Königliches Hoftheater in Dresden, with soprano Margarethe Siems as the Marschallin and mezzo-soprano Eva von der Osten as her young lover, Octavian. Tickets for the first night, which is conducted by Ernst von Schuch, sell out rapidly and the opera proves hugely popular from the outset.

28th: The Swedish opera singer **Wilhelmina Fundin** dies at the age of 91. A good friend of fellow soprano Jenny Lind, Fundin took over many of Lind's leading roles at the Royal Theatre in Stockholm when 'The Swedish Nightingale' started to tour abroad in the 1840s. Fundin herself, best known for singing Mozart and Bellini, preferred to avoid travel.

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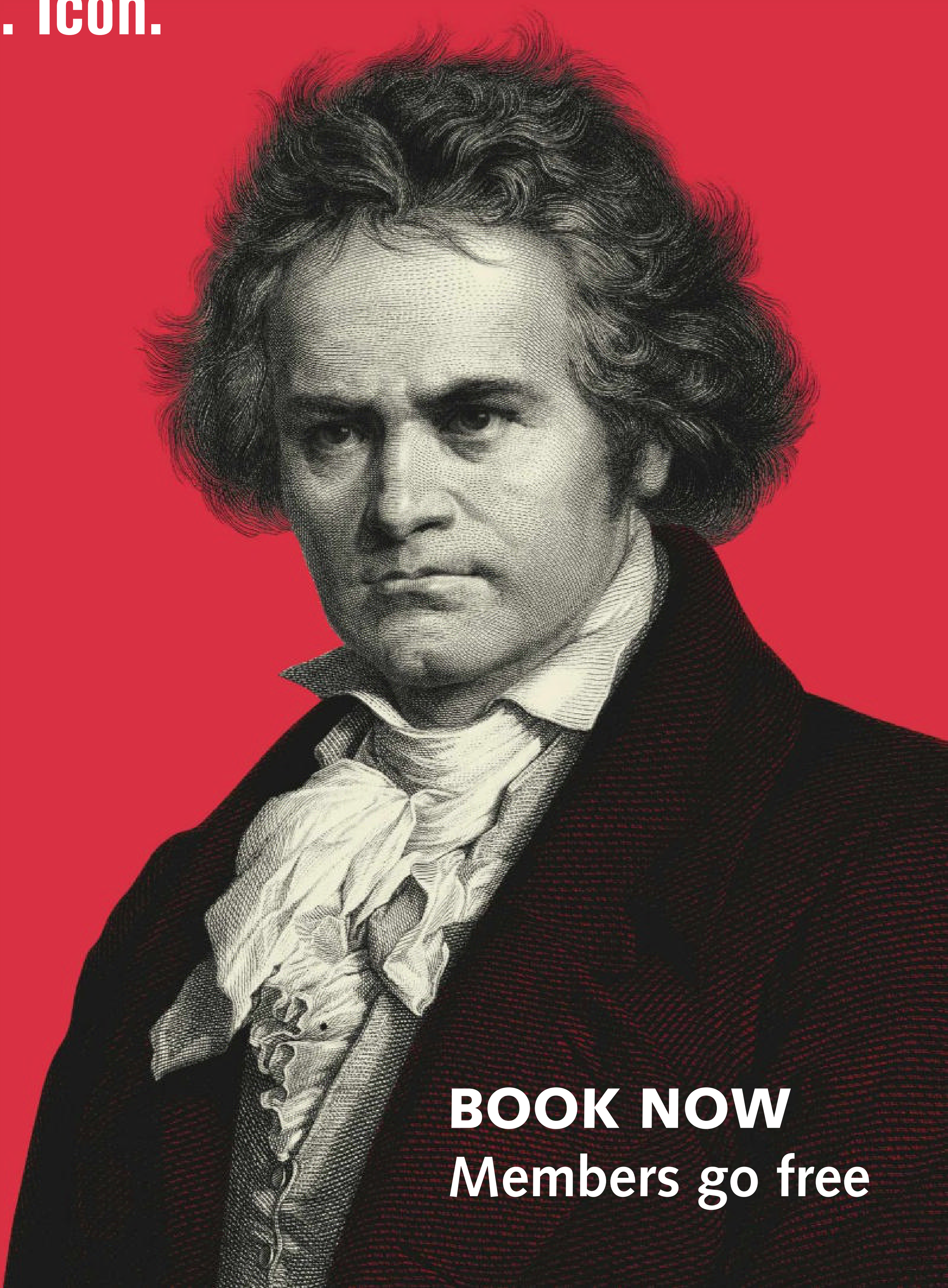

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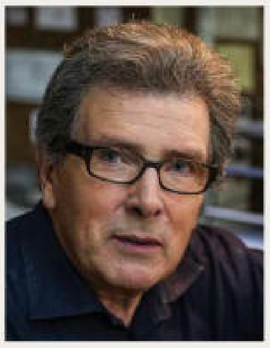
Orliński reveals an impressively sparkly range

Singers often find their voices described in reviews as 'silvery', 'golden-hued' and the like, so what better way for countertenor Jakub Józef Orliński to release his new *Anima Aeterna* album by launching an accompanying range of jewellery? Designed by Marta Kłyszejko, the range takes its theme from the honey locust thorns on the album's cover and from traditional baroque jewellery, reflecting the era of the music itself. Though the prices may elicit a squeak as high as Orliński's upper register, the pieces are, admittedly, really rather classy.

DÉJÀ VU

History just keeps on repeating itself…



In the run-up to Christmas, BBC Radio 3 and 4 *had* planned to broadcast a new radio version of Raymond Briggs's *The Snowman*, narrated by Stephen Fry. A nice idea, but the plug was, alas, pulled when composer Howard Blake (left) took exception to the BBC Singers' new choral version of his accompanying score. He is not the first composer to complain about others' treatment of their music…

Tchaikovsky was devastated by the tinkerings made to his *Variations on a Rococo Theme* by the work's dedicatee, cellist Wilhelm Fitzenhagen, who took out one variation and re-ordered others. He mourned to a friend: 'Fitzenhagen's been here. Look what he's done with my composition!'. Decades later, **Ravel** was similarly miffed when, for a London performance, impresario Serge Diaghilev removed the wordless chorus from his ballet *Daphnis et Chloé*. 'I am deeply surprised and grieved,' he wrote to *The Times*. And in 1940, **Prokofiev** took umbrage in the first Soviet production of *Romeo and Juliet* when dancers complained they were unable to hear his music, and roared 'I know what you want – you want drums, not music!' Percussion was duly added to the score without his permission. **Stravinsky** is known to have belatedly taken against the edits of his music in Disney's *Fantasia* film, and **Holst**'s daughter Imogen fought to put a halt to the electronic version of *The Planets* by synthesizer whizz Isao Tomita. Finally, there's the late **Sondheim**'s letter in response to a producer's request in 2018: 'No, you may not mash-up "Send in the Clowns" with "Baby Shark" for panto season.'

ROBIN CLEWLEY, CLIVE BARDA ILLUSTRATION: JONTY CLARK

MEET THE COMPOSER

Laura Bowler

A vocal approach: 'I pretty much sing every part I write'

Winner of this year's RPS Award for Chamber-Scale Composition, Laura Bowler is a composer and performer who lives to push boundaries and disrupt the cultural status quo, as shown in her winning work, *Wicked Problems*. Her new opera, *The Blue Woman*, will open at the Royal Opera House's Linbury Theatre in July.

I think very physically when I'm writing. I pretty much sing every part I write, so it's very much coming from my own body. A lot of what drives me is that I deeply care about most of the things I'm tackling. After I've written, I always feel like I've been dragged through a bush backwards! It's a very emotionally exhausting experience.

Doing a masters in theatre directing at RADA was revelatory. Before every project we'd ask 'Why are we making this?', 'Why now?' and 'Who are we making it for?' – questions I'd never been asked to think about during my training as a composer.

***Wicked Problems* is one of a few works I've written about climate change.** This was me attempting to do it on a smaller scale – my *Antarctica* piece was massive. When I had the chance to write this piece, it was important to try and encapsulate it on a more intimate level.

I'd like to write more instrumental music. My favourite instrument has always been the cello. It's so dexterous and it has so many different qualities; I just find it glorious, which is why my opera for next year is having four cellists.

***The Blue Woman* is a project that I've been thinking about for years.** It looks at the fractured female psyche, post-sexual violence, and it pulling itself together again. It's a very hopeful piece, and it was really important to me that I made a piece that wasn't doing what the operatic canon so often does, which is place the woman as victim. The libretto is by Laura Lomas; it's just incredibly beautiful and I feel so lucky to be doing it.

A lot of my influence comes from outside music. I have lots of images of [designer] Alexander McQueen shows around – there's a brutality and a beautiful violence in his work that I find captivating. It's the boldness, directness and unapologetic approach to creating work that really inspires me. I like work that's not afraid to be vulnerable or to be raw and imperfect.

StudioSecrets

Top Czechs: Pavel Haas Quartet record Brahms

We reveal who's recording what and where...

The ***Pavel Haas Quartet*** recently teamed up with pianist Boris Giltburg and violist Pavel Nikl to record an album of music by Brahms. The musicians gathered in Prague in November for the recording sessions, which saw them perform the composer's Quintet No. 2 in G major and Piano Quintet in F minor. Supraphon will release it in April.

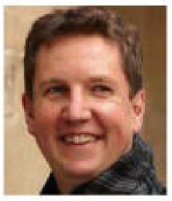
Just before that, in March, ***The Bach Choir*** will release an album entitled *Bach Inspired*. The recording project sees new commissions inspired by the *St Matthew Passion*'s chorales, from the composers James B Wilson, Gavin Higgins, Héloïse Werner, Charlotte Harding, Carmen Ho and Des Oliver. Sessions took place earlier this year, in small groups, at St John's Smith Square in London.

British composer ***Robert Saxton*** is the focus of a new recording from Métier, currently scheduled for release in the summer. It features four works composed 2013-19: *A Hymn to the Thames, Fantasy Pieces,* Suite for Violin and Piano and *Time and the Seasons* and will be performed by commissioning artists, including Roderick Williams and the Fidelio Trio.

John Andrews returns to Resonus Classics (following this year's BBC Music Magazine Awards win for *The Dancing Master*) for a recording of John Frederick Lampe's operatic comedy *The Dragon of Wantley*. Not only that, Andrews has another Sullivan disc in the pipeline for Dutton, plus a recording of Nicholas Barton's *Accord* planned for Toccata Classics in the summer.

German baritone ***Benjamin Appl*** has been signed to the Alpha Classics label. And the 39 year-old isn't hanging about, as at least four recordings are already in the works. These include a *Winterreise* with pianist James Baillieu (see *BBC Music Magazine Interview*, p32), a Kurtág tribute and a creation story project called *Forbidden Fruit*.

BORIS GILTBURG, BENJAMIN EALOVEGA, CHRISTINE SCHNEIDER



REWIND

Great artists talk about their past recordings

This month: IAN PAGE *Conductor, The Mozartists*

MY FINEST MOMENT
Sturm und Drang, Vol. 1
The Mozartists et al/Ian Page
Signum Classics SIGCD619 (2020)

Part of the rationale behind this series was that the repertoire was a really good fit for this orchestra.

The Haydn minor-key symphonies of the period are the backbone of the series, but there are so many other pieces that we've been discovering. It just seemed a lovely way to wrap them up, to do that cross-spectrum type of programming. I loved the fact that none of the players knew the Beck symphony – there was a mass appreciation of it. I love that feeling when you come across a piece of repertoire and you realise it's not just you – that everyone thinks it's a gem and a real discovery.

Sturm und Drang is a phrase everybody knows. For me it was such a clear zeitgeist, where there was this sense of an emotional reaction against the niceties of rococo Baroquery. People really just wanted to roll up their sleeves, get their hands dirty and be ultra-expressive and ultra-emotional.

A perfect fit: Ian Page and The Mozartists record *Sturm und Drang*

This was just such a happy experience, and I think the programme worked really well.

MY FONDEST MEMORY

Mozart *Il re pastore*

The Mozartists et al/Ian Page
Signum Classics SIGCD433 (2015)

This was probably about the fourth recording of our complete Mozart cycle. It was mid-summer and we were in St John's Smith Square, so we were in the centre of town, but ridiculously surrounded by peace and quiet. It was a lovely working atmosphere and location. It's a historic location as well – it felt great to record 18th-century music there.

We had a lovely cast. They were all people I knew and had worked with before, but I think probably quite a lot of them hadn't worked with each other, and tenor John Mark Ainsley had never worked with The Mozartists before. I'd worked with him at Glyndebourne right at the beginning of our careers. I just love the process of working with him; he was a joy from start to finish. Soprano Sarah Fox was somebody I had coached when she was a student and had known a long time, but I'd only recently worked with tenor Ben Hulett and soprano Anna Devin. Everyone gelled, which isn't always the case. Someone that's such an integral part of the team is Andrew Mellor, who produces and engineers everything we do – if he's not available we'll switch dates. He has become a fantastic strength and support, collaborator and friend. I just love the sound he captures.

I'D LIKE ANOTHER GO AT...

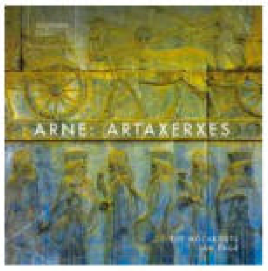
Arne *Artaxerxes*

The Mozartists et al/Ian Page
Signum Classics SIGCD672 (2009/21)

This was a long time ago, and it's a piece that's close to my heart. It's not at all mainstream and I'd love another go at making it more appreciated and known.

It was an interesting recording process too, because we did it right on the back of a production. We'd done a run of eight performances and went straight into a studio with a completely different acoustic – much more generous than the Linbury Studio where we'd done the run. That ended up not being helpful, because we'd got it so well oiled that I would have preferred a drier acoustic, where you could hear more of the detail.

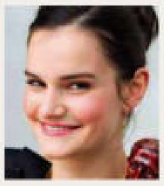
Also there's just something a little bit... 'stale' would be way too strong a word! But it was at the end of a long run and we'd been working on it for three months, so the chance to come back to it and have a freshness, and not be aligned to a specific production, would be better.



The best opera recordings have the feeling of a radio play version, where all the acting has to be in the sound. I think when a cast has got used to a production, it's quite hard to step back and really explore the piece from an exclusively aural position.

Ian Page and The Mozartists appear at Cadogan Hall on 27 January, and the third volume of 'Sturm und Drang' is scheduled for release in June

Buried Treasure



Cellist ***Raphaela Gromes*** introduces favourite recordings from her own collection

Klengel Cello Concertos Nos 1 & 4

Xenia Jankovic, Christoph Richter (cello); NDR Radiophilharmonie / Bjarte Engeset *CPO 999 7142*

This recording of Klengel's Fourth Cello Concerto and his Double Concerto has been one of my favourites since my childhood. To me, Julius Klengel is one of the greatest Romantic composers and it is totally incomprehensible that he is almost forgotten today. I was so happy to be able to do the world premiere recording of his beautiful and thrilling Third Cello Concerto as part of a recent album.

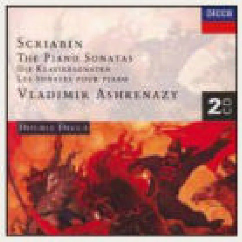
Servais Souvenir de Spa

Wen-Sinn Yang (cello); Munich Radio Orchestra/Terje Mikkelsen
CPO 777 5422

This marvellous recording was one of the reasons that made me want to study with Wen-Sinn Yang. He plays this operatic music by the Belgian composer and cellist Adrien François Servais with great aplomb, shaping the well-known melodies in an intense narrative style and the stunningly virtuoso passages with enchanting lightness and humour.

Scriabin Piano Sonatas; Quatre Morceaux etc

Vladimir Ashkenazy (piano)
Decca 452 9612



This is a very important recording, but it is surprisingly little known, especially among non-pianists. The tense sonatas (which Scriabin composed between 1892-1913) show a fascinating development from a late-Romantic style to a highly personal modern style. I think it is one of the most impressive cycles of piano music; it has an enormous range of sound colours, vibrant energy and almost addictive harmonies.

Raphaela Gromes's latest album, 'Imagination', is out now on Sony Classical

THE LISTENING SERVICE

Can we really be in tune?

Modern technology should, in theory, help musicians be more in tune than ever; but, **Tom Service** argues, it may actually distort how we hear the music we perform

ILLUSTRATION: MARIA CORTE MAIDAGAN

It's a phrase we use all the time, not least on Radio 3, where our drivetime show is literally called *In Tune*. But that begs the question; what does being 'in tune' really mean? It seems obvious: being out of tune as opposed to in tune is the contrast between Florence Foster Jenkins's exquisitely appalling attempts to sing the Queen of the Night's Act II aria from Mozart's *The Magic Flute* and the way any professional soprano sings the same aria, with those high Fs pinging gloriously in the right place. It's the difference between the gleeful massacring of Beethoven's Fifth Symphony by the Portsmouth Sinfonia – riotously out of tune – and how the Hallé Orchestra might play it, with decorous in-tune-ness.

And yet intonation is a more slippery concept than it seems. According to the immutable pitches of piano keyboards and digital sequencers, each semitone of the scale has an absolute value. That's because of the theory of equal temperament, which splits the octave into 12 equal parts. Thanks especially to the dominance of sequencers in the world's pop music, this way of hearing has become the dominant mode of musical perception on the planet. But equal temperament is an acoustic fudge, because it irons out the complexities of the harmonic series to fit those 12 notes into semitone-sized straitjackets.

And that's not how our favourite string players or vocalists actually perform. String quartets are sublty altering the size of the semitones they play according to the ever-shifting harmonic and melodic tapestry of Mozart, Beethoven or Haydn. As Arnold Steinhardt, the leader of the Guarneri Quartet said, 'the difficulty in string quartet intonation is to determine the degree of freedom you have at any given moment'. That 'freedom' means expressively bending and shaping their tuning to be in tune not with equally tempered abstraction, but with the emotional and acoustic context of the music.

Being in tune is about something much bigger than only getting the notes right

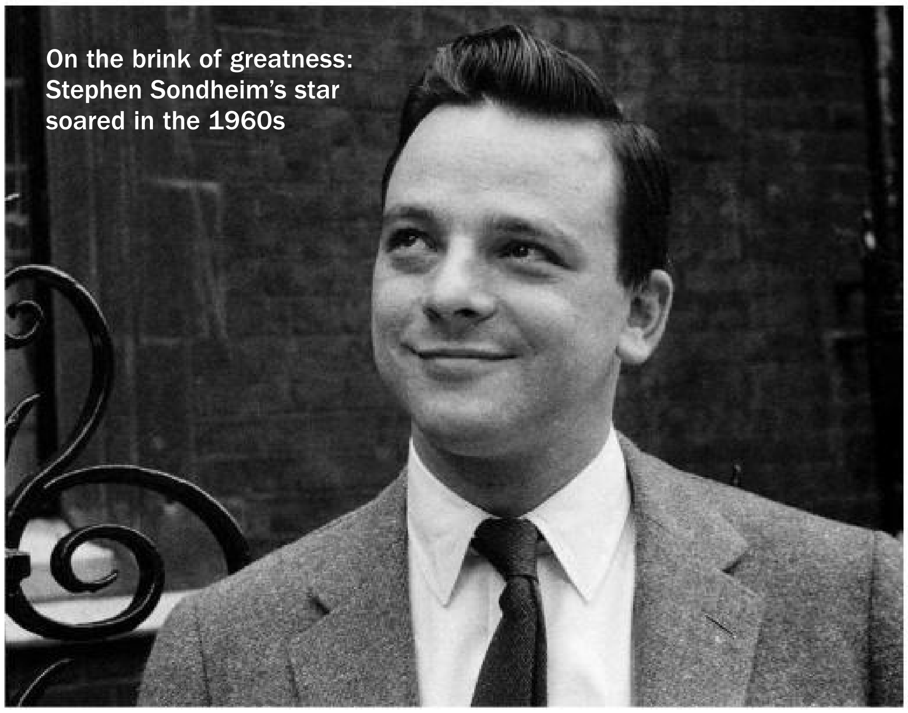
Which means that to play music that feels in tune to them, and to us, string quartets have to perform, according to the piano, out of tune. That's the same paradox that singers like Maria Callas and Ella Fitzgerald, Bessie Smith and Tom Waits demonstrate: their voices, their vibrato and their expressive intensity sound perfectly in tune, but they are actually singing in between and around the notes – less dramatically than Florence Foster Jenkins, but the difference is one of degree, not of kind.

The feeling and the acoustic reality of being in tune is about something much bigger and more meaningful than only getting the notes right, merely fitting in with the compromised calculus of the piano keyboard or the digital sequencer. Like our music, our emotions aren't truly equally tempered: they are messily in between and in sympathy with the people and the contexts of our lives. To be truly in tune, our music has to resonate with that same expressive wildness.

BBC RADIO 3 90–93FM

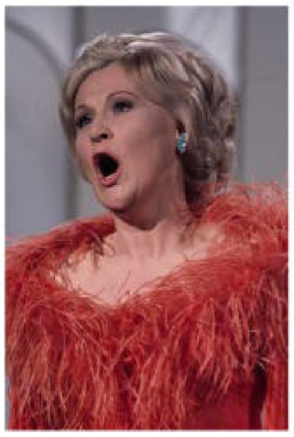
Tom Service explores how music works in *The Listening Service* on Sundays at 5pm

FAREWELL TO...



On the brink of greatness: Stephen Sondheim's star soared in the 1960s

Stephen Sondheim Born 1930 *Composer, Lyricist*
Sondheim's impact on musical theatre cannot be underestimated. Over a 60-plus-year career he continued to think outside of the box, producing some of the world's most beloved shows. Sure there was glitz, there were showstoppers, but there was also complexity and depth. No two shows were ever the same; their style, subject matter and format were always innovative. Born in New York, he studied music at Williams College in Massachusetts and then composition under composer Milton Babbitt. Writing for shows and plays at college, Sondheim found his place in the world, though he would do other things like write screenplays for television and even the occasional crossword for the *New York Magazine*. Under the wing of Oscar Hammerstein II he honed his craft, debuting his first professional show in 1954: *Saturday Night*. If that didn't light up the stage, his next two projects would – Bernstein's *West Side Story* (1957) and Jule Styne's *Gypsy* (1959) featured his lyrics. Then came the 1960s and the beginning of a remarkable run. *A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to the Forum, Company, Follies, Sweeney Todd, Into the Woods...* the list goes on. And the awards came thick and fast, including a clutch of Tonys, an Oscar and a Pulitzer. We will be paying fuller tribute in a future issue.



Joan Carlyle Born 1931 *Soprano*
Born in Cheshire, Carlyle (pictured left in 1970) went on to become one of the shining stars of the Royal Opera, joining its ranks when it was still called the Covent Garden Opera Company. Debuting in a production of *Carmen* in 1955, the following two decades would see her rise through the ranks from light to full lyric soprano roles, for which she was critically lauded. As a result she was in demand across Europe and performed on stages in Vienna, Berlin, Amsterdam and Milan, among others. Her retirement years were spent teaching and giving masterclasses at the Royal College of Music.

Also remembered...

Pamela Helen Stephen (*born 1965*), was an award-winning British mezzo-soprano who performed regularly with Opera North and English National Opera. She notably performed the role of Caesar in a 2012 production of Handel's *Giulio Cesare*.

English composer **Gordon Crosse** (*born 1937*) wrote many works for the stage including music theatre pieces, opera and ballet. He worked regularly with the poet Ted Hughes.

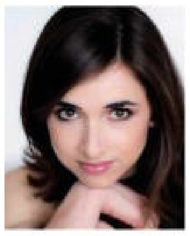
GETTY

Supreme Mozart: Maria João Pires is admired by harpist Anaëlle Tourret

Music to my ears

What the classical world has been listening to this month

Anaëlle Tourret Harpist



Maria João Pires is a pianist I admire so much – for me, she is *the* interpreter of Mozart for today. I went to a festival concert last June in Hamburg where she was a guest of fellow pianist Martha Argerich. They played a Mozart sonata for two pianos, but the first half hour was just Pires. She played two pieces by Schubert, and it was incredible. To see those two phenomenal artists playing together is something I will remember for a long time.

I love **Mahler**, and recently we, the NDR Elbphilharmonie Orchestra, got the opportunity to play his First Symphony. We had the great joy of playing it with Manfred Honeck as conductor. He brought all the Vienna traditions with him, and we had an amazing week. This symphony is really close to my heart; you can see landscapes, you can hear the tradition. It was the first time I had the chance to play it, but I've known it since I was a child.

A musician I admire so much is the cellist **Steven Isserlis**. I have been listening on Spotify to his recording of Schumann's Concerto with the Deutsche Kammerphilharmonie and conductor Christoph Eschenbach for weeks now. We were on tour recently in Europe and every time I was at the hotel, waiting for the concerts, I would listen to this recording. There is, alas, no harp in this concerto but Isserlis is so amazing. I have also been watching his masterclasses on YouTube, and he is so inspiring.

And also…
Music is a huge part of my life, and I also dance a lot. I learned **ballet** for ten years then stopped for a bit, but am now taking classes again. We have an amazing company in Hamburg run by John Neumeier and it's a goal of mine to have the courage and go to a class there, because he is amazing. I love watching ballet online as well.

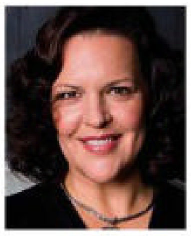
Anaëlle Tourret's debut solo album 'Perspectives' is out now on the Es-Dur label

READER CHOICE

Margaret Smith
Blackburn

Though my singing voice is not what it used to be, I still have a love of choral music and really enjoy hunting around the internet for interesting new or recently composed choral repertoire that, in the past, I might have enjoyed having a go at. I love the atmosphere created by composers like Eric Whitacre, Morten Lauridsen and, especially, **Judith Bingham** in works such as *The Spirit of Truth*. Just from listening to how Bingham weaves her choral lines, you can tell she used to be a singer herself!

Adrianne Pieczonka Soprano



Enargeia, the debut recording by the young Canadian mezzo **Emily D'Angelo**, is a mesmerising and eclectic group of mainly newly composed songs – truly remarkable in its groundbreaking departure from standard repertoire. On it, I particularly enjoy *Caritas* by the American composer Sarah Kirkland Snider, which features text based on Hildegard von Bingen's poetry. Inspiring and spiritual, the entire album is curated to be a journey, from one song to the next.

I've also been enjoying the Canadian/Macedonian mezzo **Ema Nikolovska**'s virtual recital with pianist Jonathan Ware for the Vancouver Recital Series from June 2021, in which she sings Brahms, Amy Beach, Debussy, Wolf and Ravel. A born recitalist, Ema weaves together incredible programmes, often not pausing between Lieder or groups of Lieder. Her curiosity and imagination remind me of the mezzo Brigitte Fassbänder's artistry, and her voice is rich and gorgeous.

Ana Sokolović is an award-winning composer whose music combines Serbian folk elements with playful rhythmic riffs and gibberish. We recently produced her 2011 opera *Svadba* (Wedding) at the Glenn Gould School of Music. It is written for six female voices who play their own 'found' instruments like cups, drums and ocarinas. The students rose admirably to this very complex score's demands and the audiences

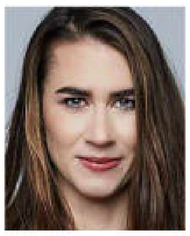
were thrilled – for many attendees, this was their first live opera in Toronto since March 2020.

And also...

I am currently reading a biography of the conductor **Toscanini** by Harvey Sachs. It is a huge tome which chronicles his life in great detail. I am fascinated to learn how differently opera was produced nearly 100 years ago – there were barely more than two weeks of rehearsals before a new production was unveiled – and Toscanini was often involved in costume and stage design as well as the dramatic staging himself.

Adrianne Pieczonka sings Clara Schumann Lieder on 'Clara – Robert – Johannes: Lyrical Echoes' on the Analekta label

Marta Gardolińska Conductor



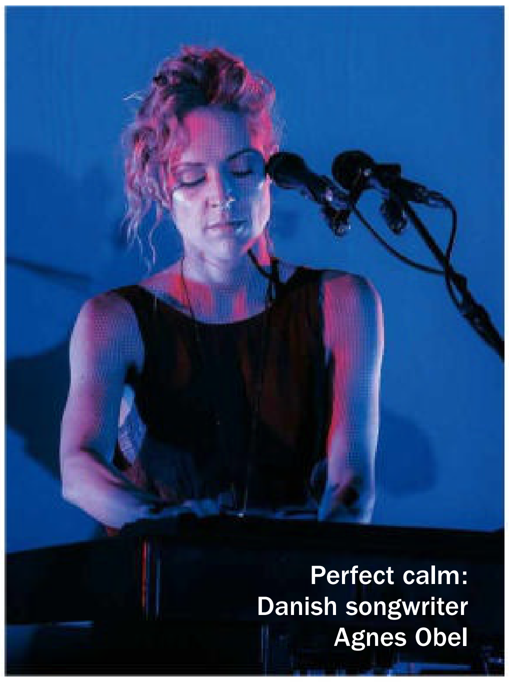
Something new that has arrived in my life recently is a record player, so I've been buying my first vinyl. I discovered **The Exciting Sounds of Menahan Street Band** by chance in a record shop in Dresden. It's light jazz which makes you want to dance, has great instrumental solos and is the perfect record to play when you have people for dinner and want something in the background that's not going to disturb the flow of conversation, but can also be the focus.

For my job, I have so much symphonic music to work through, so I tend to turn to other genres or instrumental music in my spare time. I recently discovered the piano sonatas of **Roberto Sierra**, a Puerto Rican composer. There

> 'Composer Roberto Sierra infuses the sonata form with a little Latin influence'

aren't many other contemporary composers of piano sonatas, and he infuses the form with a little Latin influence. It's something I often listen to while I'm travelling.

I often listen to music when I read, because it's become difficult for me to concentrate when in complete silence. My flat is very quiet, so I prefer to listen to the music of **Agnes Obel** – particularly her album *Aventine* – to focus my thoughts and help me relax. I first heard it in an empty coffee shop in



Perfect calm: Danish songwriter Agnes Obel

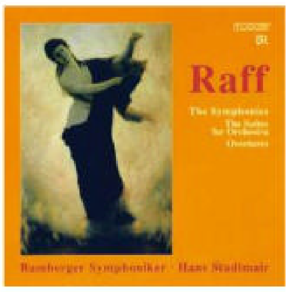
Warsaw a few years ago, and it was so serene I had to ask the barista what it was. It's extremely calming and a little nostalgic, but neither depressing nor agitating.

And also...

I'm a huge **coffee** geek, so I always try and find a good barista in whatever city I'm in. It's important for me to take time to do nothing and watch the city go by. My favourite is Balthasar Kaffee Bar in Vienna, where they do a 'slayer shot' of espresso, changing the pressure during extraction.

Marta Gardolińska conducts the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra on 13 January (see p96)

READER CHOICE



David Bugbee
Cheyenne, WY, US

I have recently been listening to my BR Klassik album of **Joachim Raff**'s symphonies conducted by Hans Stadlmair. Raff stuck to familiar paths, with music reminiscent of Mendelssohn, Schumann, Beethoven, and Dvořák. He was not an innovator – he didn't need to be. The set of all his symphonies plus a number of his other orchestral works, is a delight for the ear, one beautiful piece after another. These are not trite, 'elevator music' pieces either, but wonderful works that never should have dropped off the radar.

Our Choices The *BBC Music Magazine* team's current favourites

Jeremy Pound *Acting editor*

Though it is always a pleasure – albeit rather a bleak one – to read about and listen to Schubert's great song cycle *Winterreise* (see *BBC Music Magazine Interview*, p32), I've recently had my attention caught by the Polish composer ***Krzysztof Penderecki***'s 2007 horn concerto of the same name. In this instance, the journey described in the music is one into a dark forest as part of a hunt – remembered by the composer from when he was a youngster. Penderecki is superb at conjuring the unsettling atmosphere of the wood as experienced through a child's perspective, but there are also thrills along the way as the music takes on an almost cinematic quality.

Alice Pearson
Cover CD editor

Music has the power to blow your mind in many different directions – and not much is more 'mind-blowing' than ***Schoenberg***'s (pictured left) *Gurrelieder*. A Danish legend about passionate love is blown up into a cantata for huge forces by the Austrian composer, who hit the peak of his 'post-Romantic, monumental' style with this intense piece. I have been listening to a stunning performance by the Berlin Philharmonic along with soloists and the radio choirs of Berlin and Leipzig, under the masterly direction of Simon Rattle.

Michael Beek *Reviews editor*

Something I won't forget in a hurry is the extraordinary concert of 'Arctic Ice Music' I went to in Bristol recently. Led by the Norwegian drummer ***Terje Isungset***, it featured amazing percussion and wind instruments carved from ice blocks, and the most mellow jazz trumpet and bass. The addition of traditional singing by artists from Canada, Norway and Mongolia made for a truly memorable performance. The soundscape they created sent shivers down the spine.

Freya Parr
Digital editor and staff writer

Having never been deemed cool enough to go to a gig at Printworks, one of London's biggest electronic music venues, I was thrilled to find that ***Aurora Orchestra*** was to play there. Sometimes, concerts in 'unexpected venues' can seem a ham-fisted approach to engage young audiences, but this felt different. With the musicians spaced around the cavernous hall, the atmosphere was electric. It was like Beethoven had designed his Seventh Symphony to be played there all along.

GETTY, HARALD HOFFMANN, JOHANNES IFKOVITS, BARTEK BARCZYK

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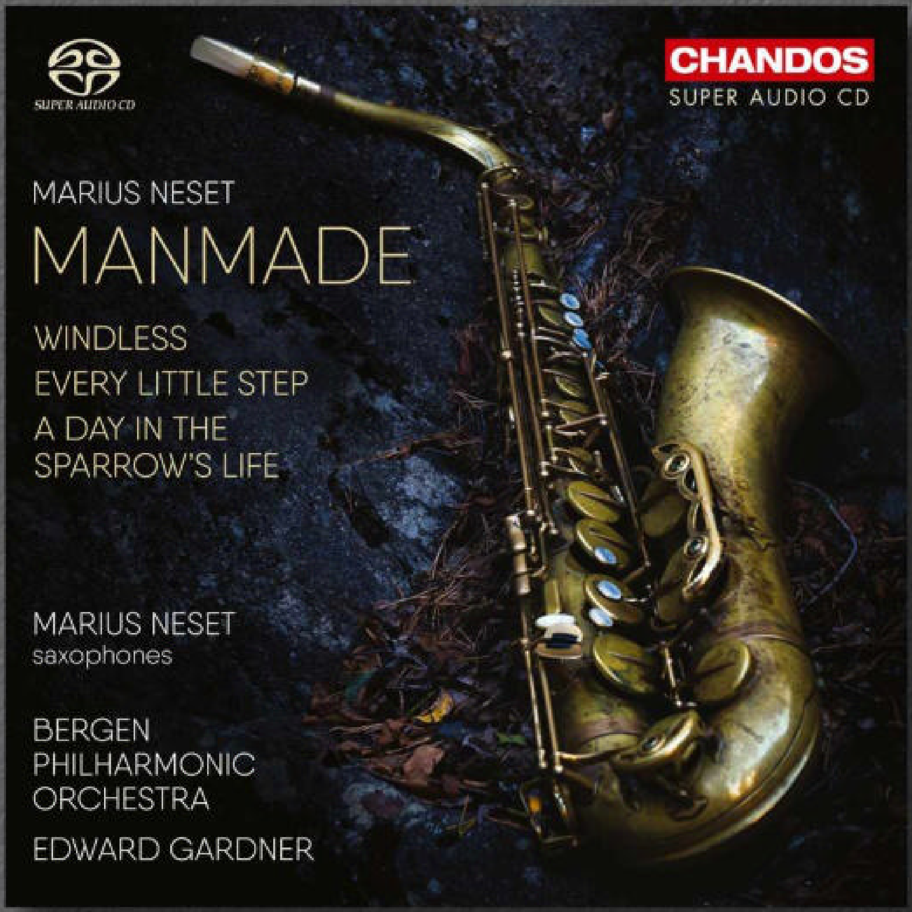

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Richard Morrison

My review of 2021 is an unforeseen tale of surprise hits and sorry misses

Alfred Brendel tells an anecdote about switching on the radio midway through some piano recital, and thinking to himself: 'My God, that player hasn't got a clue'. Then came the inevitable announcement: 'That was Alfred Brendel…'. At a somewhat less exalted level, we hacks often feel something similar if we stumble over our old articles. 'Wow, I was naive/dense/just a kid,' I find myself thinking. 'I've learnt so much since then.'

But have I? This week I looked back over a column I wrote here just a year ago, when the editor asked me to identify 'green shoots of recovery' for a classical music world that was still lockdowned and, it seemed, almost knocked out. I wish I could say Mystic Morrison's predictions have turned out to be spot on, but it seems that 12 months ago I was still naive, dense and just a kid.

How, for example, could I have been so optimistic about online streaming? Did it really seem, 12 months ago, as if this was the answer to classical music's problems, allowing audiences across the world to enjoy live performances not just of orchestras and opera companies but also chamber groups and soloists?

A year on, most organisations are streaming no more than a tiny fraction of their live performances, and quite a few none at all. The reason? Money, pure and simple. Unless you are the Berlin Philharmonic or New York Metropolitan Opera and can invest millions in permanent new technology and sufficient bandwidth, streaming quickly drains your resources rather than growing them.

And although in the early weeks of lockdown we all found it charming that famous musicians were streaming Bach (it always seemed to be Bach) from their living rooms, now we are less tolerant of primitive camera angles and patchy sound. People have come to expect Netflix-standard production values from everything they watch on their home screens. But Netflix has spent £400m so far on *The Crown*. Classical music will never compete with those budgets.

I was just as hopeful that the clampdown on travel and the hassle of quarantine would lead soloists and orchestras into making a permanent shift away from continual and often pointless touring ('You send us your Mahler Five, we'll send you ours') and towards a professional musical life more embedded in local communities. I haven't entirely given up on that hope, but I've been disappointed to see some classical music organisations slithering back into bad old habits.

The glut of brilliant British premieres in the last six months has been exhilarating

Musicians should be reducing their carbon footprints as much as possible, and in the next few years they will come under increasing pressure to do so. It's not just a question of reducing their own touring. It also involves things like adjusting concert and opera timings so that older (and younger) audience members feel they can get home easily on public transport; and nurturing local or regional talent rather than constantly flying in soloists and conductors of less-than-dazzling quality from abroad.

In some areas, however, I was too pessimistic. I feared that choirs, especially the large amateur choruses that play such a big part in British concert life, would take ages to recover from their months of enforced silence. In fact, they have sprung back incredibly quickly. And I also fretted that, with the finances of music organisations so clobbered by the pandemic, we would encounter years of 'play safe' programming. Actually, I've been impressed by the bold programming I have enjoyed in the last six months.

The rediscovery of outstanding scores by forgotten women and minority ethnic composers has been partly responsible for that. Who knew about Florence Price ten years ago? But there's also been a glut of brilliant premieres as Britain's present-day composers – a vintage crop, in my opinion – show us what they have been cooking up during lockdown. It's like a dam bursting, and it's exhilarating.

One big cloud still hangs over musical life. That's the alarming patchiness of music education provision in state schools. If you have a head teacher who really cares about the arts, and inspired teachers in the classroom, superb standards can be achieved. In thousands of schools, however, another generation of students is not getting the chance to fulfil its musical potential. Weaning our political leaders off their obsession with science and technology, to the exclusion of arts and humanities, is going to be the biggest challenge facing the music world in the next year. I wish I could be more hopeful about its prospects.

Richard Morrison is chief music critic and a columnist of The Times

Aiming high

Whether singing Wagner at the great opera houses or recording Grieg in the Arctic Circle with one of the world's finest pianists, the Norwegian Lise Davidsen is a soprano rapidly on the rise, as Brian Wise finds out

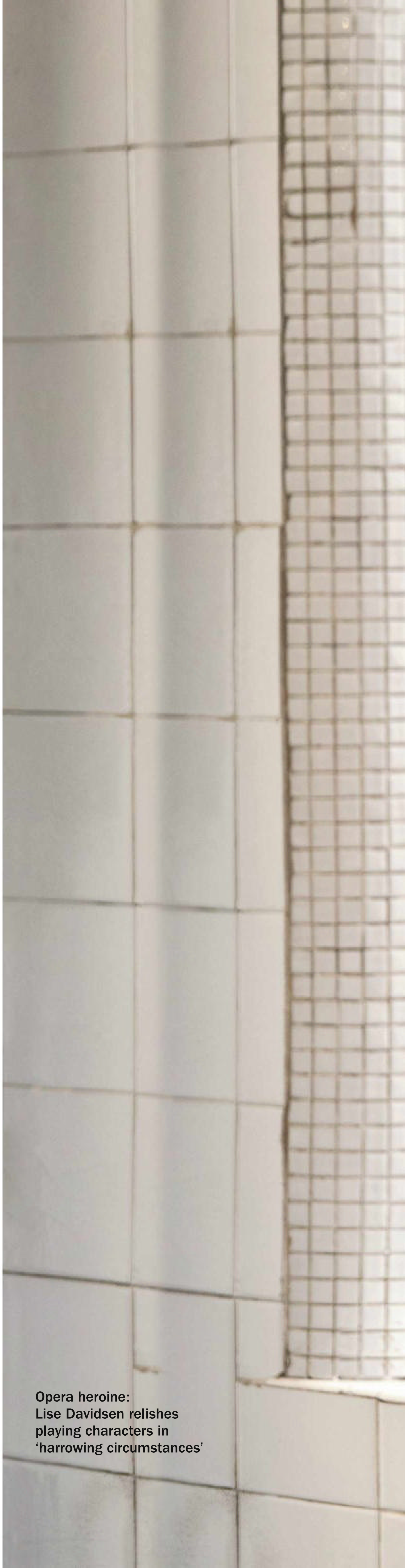
When Lise Davidsen arrived in New York in October, she was embarking on her newest role, as Eva in the Metropolitan Opera's six-performance run of Wagner's *Die Meistersinger.* Between rehearsals, something offstage caught the Norwegian soprano's eye: people were strutting around the west side of Manhattan dressed as characters from comic books, video games and superhero movies. Comic-Con was in full swing at the Jacob Javits Convention Center.

Only when Davidsen spoke at a meeting of the Wagner Society of New York did the connection to her own line of work become obvious. 'This was like a *Star Wars* meeting,' she says, marveling at the passion and knowledge of Wagner enthusiasts. 'It's the same as Comic-Con. It's just that, with Wagner, these people are a bit older and they don't dress up like the characters.'

The 34 year-old from Stokke, Norway is quickly learning about the world – including the hardcore fans – whose upper echelons she has come to inhabit. Critics on multiple continents have hailed her as the next great Wagnerian soprano, whose clarion, multi-hued voice can soar above the densest orchestrations and fill 3,500-seat halls.

Her demeanour in a wide-ranging interview is focused and matter-of-fact, yet she claims to thrive on characters in harrowing circumstances. 'That's what I love most about opera,' she says, 'that I can go to work and get into all of these roles. Of course, it is demanding. It's focused. But the good part is you have to be in touch with all of the emotions in one evening. It's like a workout. Maybe I wasn't able to say these things that I feel, but I got something out and now I'm back again.'

Davidsen's is a voice not destined for many comedy roles. When she returns to the Vienna State Opera in May for Wagner's *Die Walküre,* she sings Sieglinde, who flees the brute Hunding only to enter into an incestuous affair and die in childbirth. In March and April, she is back at the Met to portray Richard Strauss's Ariadne, who has been abandoned by Theseus on island of Naxos, and



Opera heroine: Lise Davidsen relishes playing characters in 'harrowing circumstances'

JAMES HOLE

18+

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Norwegian wooed: Leif Ove Andsnes readily accepted Davidsen's invitation

Versatile voice: as Leonore in Beethoven's *Fidelio* at Covent Garden, 2020; Davidsen is equally at home in (below) Wagner or (bottom) Grieg

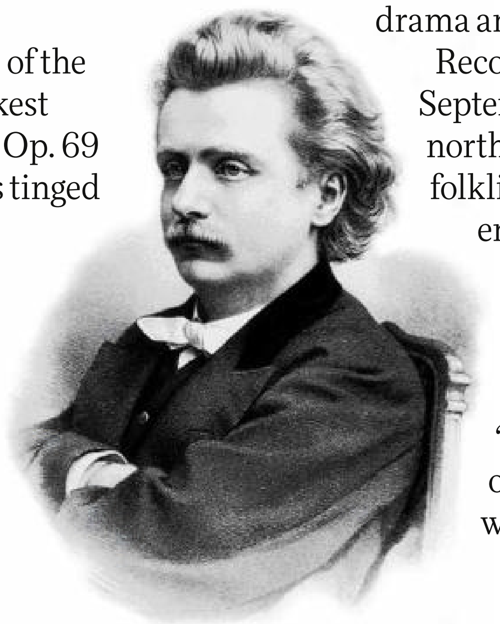
Chrysothemis, the good-hearted sister with serious family troubles in same composer's *Elektra*.

Davidsen is also expanding her recital repertoire. Her latest recording for Decca is a collection of 28 songs by Grieg, which fulfills a longstanding wish to collaborate with pianist and countryman Leif Ove Andsnes. Its centrepieces are the Op. 67 cycle *Haugtussa* (The Mountain Maid) and the six Op. 48 songs, which feature verses by German poets. The latter opus aside, most of the songs are often deemed linguistically prohibitive by non-Norwegian singers, their wistful lyricism and pristine imagery off-limits.

'It's a good picture of Norway and his world,' Davidsen says of Grieg's song output. 'But it's much more than that. It's simplicity combined with high romance. It's everything from "Snegl, Snegl" [Snail, Snail] to "Ved Moders Grav" [At Mother's Grave]. I think the language is what stands in the way mainly.'

Davidsen refers to two of the album's lightest and darkest moments, both from the Op. 69 set. 'At Mother's Grave' is tinged with wary dissonances and Grieg's reflections on motherhood, while 'Snail, Snail' is a whimsical look at timid souls who remain in their shells, fearful of venturing out into the world. 'I must say, the first time that I read "Snegl, Snegl" I thought, is this really a song about a snail? Because that's weird,' she says. 'But of course, there is some sort of a questioning: are we happy with what we have or should we have something else?'

Davidsen secured her highly acclaimed pianist by approaching him during a connection at Bergen Airport. As Andsnes recalls, 'She was very direct and said: "I just have to ask you something. Would you do a recording with me?" I immediately said yes, of course.' Andsnes marvels at the breadth of Grieg's subjects and the music's epic qualities. 'Many of these songs are known in Norway in versions with a smaller, more girly, folklike voice. It's fantastic how Lise has got into this world and made it her own so that we can really do these songs with drama and flexibility.'



Recording took place in September in Bodø, a port town north of the Arctic Circle. Grieg's folklike melodies seemed to emerge from the late summer air. 'We spent four days in the studio and that made it very contemplative and emotional,' Davidsen says. 'You couldn't just drop out of it. You were there and that was the mission for the trip.'

A European recital tour is planned for January, featuring Lieder by Grieg, Strauss and Wagner and concluding at London's Barbican on 13 January.

Davidsen's vocal training began in Grieg's home town of Bergen, at the conservatory that carries his name. But the roots of her career are found in Stokke, a village some 90 minutes south of Oslo. Her mother, Wenche, was a social worker; her father, Kjell, an electrician. Sports were dominant in the Davidsen family, and Lise, following her athletic older brother and sister, developed a competitive streak playing handball and football.

But music held a stronger appeal. From age five, the young Lise sang in Christmas Eve services at her church, and as a student at Sandefjord, a large, nationally recognised secondary school, she pursued a performing arts curriculum. After an English teacher handed her some CDs by Bonnie Raitt and Eva Cassidy, she took up the guitar and entertained the idea

of becoming a singer-songwriter. At this point, Davidsen also joined a girls' choir, whose directors encouraged her to study classical singing. 'When I applied to the Grieg Academy, I applied as a classical singer,' she says. 'That's where I sort of found Bach and choral music.'

It wasn't a straightforward path. Davidsen started as a mezzo-soprano, studying Baroque repertoire and singing alto parts in the Norwegian Soloists Choir. In 2010, she sang for Susanna Eken, a noted voice teacher at the Royal Danish Academy of Music in Copenhagen. Eken told Davidsen that she wasn't a mezzo, but a soprano, and that she should not sing Baroque oratorios, but 19th-century opera. Davidsen was distraught. 'I felt so comfortable and so happy in this mezzo, Baroque world,' she says. 'When Susanna said that, it came as a huge shock.' But the previous four years were not a wasted effort. 'It established my lower register. The voice was centered and my musicality could develop without having too many technical issues.'

'It's fantastic how Lise has got into Grieg's world and made it her own'

Eken recalls their first meeting. 'I could smell her potential, that she was this huge girl with a huge voice,' she says, referring to Davidsen's 6'2" stature. 'I told her that she had a gorgeous voice but, at the same time, it was a big machine so she had to work with her body. Then I worked with her and I followed the voice.'

Davidsen was accepted into the Academy's master's degree programme. 'Lisa is a special personality,' Eken continues. 'She is extremely dedicated, extremely focused, extremely ambitious, extremely competitive, and she worked like hell.'

After three years of study, Davidsen was ready for the competition circuit as a dramatic soprano, and in the summer of 2015 she clinched first prizes at the Operalia competition in London and the Queen Sonja International Music Competiton in Oslo. The child of a sports-loving family who never attended an opera until age 19 was suddenly hoisting trophies beside Norway's queen. Her calendar was soon filled with dates at the Frankfurt Opera and the Bavarian State Opera followed a season later by the Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra (Strauss's *Four Last Songs*) and the Glyndebourne Festival, in the title role of *Ariadne auf Naxos*.

When the Norwegian Broadcasting Corporation (NRK) filmed a recent television documentary on Davidsen's life, the producers hoisted a camera on a boom outside her fourth-floor window in a nondescript yellow apartment block. It captured her warm-up routine from a Covid-safe distance. The pandemic not only cancelled much of her schedule but she herself contracted Covid-19 in March 2020, just as she was singing Leonore in *Fidelio* at Covent Garden. 'I was unaware that I had it so I was one of the lucky ones,' she says, noting only some fatigue and a loss of smell. 'I did my dress rehearsal with Covid so, looking back, I probably sent it around at the Royal Opera.'

Davidsen got vaccinated as soon as she could and praises the Met's opening protocols, which include twice-weekly testing and masked rehearsals. 'It's not back to normal, 100 per cent, but it's back to a life, and it's back to doing what I like to do,' she says. 'I can travel and I can get into America to sing. It was emotional when I came on stage. It's almost like my debut all over again.'

After the largely positive reviews of Davidsen's Eva, opera's chattering classes renewed speculation over when she might take up the two crowning roles for Wagnerian sopranos: Brünnhilde and Isolde. But with Wagner come larger questions. How much is too much? Who has a singer's best interests in mind? And should a musician place their stock in a composer who held some reprehensible

Knowing her own strength: 'the German repertoire that I do suits my voice, and maybe my temper'; predecessors (left) Kirsten Flagstad and (below left) Ingrid Bjoner

Noteworthy Norwegians

Five leading sopranos and mezzos

Kirsten Flagstad *(1895-1962)*
One of the world's greatest sopranos (pictured above), Flagstad shot to fame with her 1935 New York Met debut as Sieglinde in *Die Walküre*. Wagner remained at the core of her repertoire, though not exclusively so; in 1950 Flagstad gave the world premiere of Richard Strauss's *Four Last Songs*. Her statue looks over Oslo Opera House.

Eva Nansen *(1858-1907)*
Born Eva Sars, she made her operatic debut in 1881 before enjoying a career as a song recitalist and giving the premiere of Grieg's *Haugtussa*. A major campaigner for women's participation in winter sports, she married the celebrated explorer Fridtjof Nansen.

Ingrid Bjoner *(1927-2006)*
Born to a farming family in Kråkstad, Bjoner (left) initially trained as a pharmacist before her vocal talent was recognised. Like Flagstad, she specialised in Wagner and Strauss.

Solveig Kringelborn *(b1963)*
A lyric soprano, Kringlebotn (to use the Norwegian spelling) leapt to fame in 1991 with her BBC Proms debut singing the premiere of Lutosławski's *Chantefleurs et Chantefables*. She has since distinguished herself in opera.

Mari Eriksmoen *(b1983)*
Another lyric soprano, Eriksmoen has been compared to the late Lucia Popp for the quality and intelligence of her singing. Her new album, reviewed p76, includes Britten's *Les illuminations*.

GETTY, JAMES HOLE

views? Davidsen acknowledges Wagner's virulent antisemitism. 'What I think about now is the Wagner family coming after him and how much they do for his music, his house and his legacy,' she says, citing her performances at the Bayreuth Festival. 'I think he is lucky to have those people who have kept up his music and his legacy. What he did could easily have meant burning it all and never doing it again.

'So, sometimes it's important to separate the person from the music – as with good books and good art and so many other things. I'm not denying that he was not a good guy and it's important to remember who he was and what he stood for. But also, one can say, I choose his music, not him.'

Such diplomatic acumen may serve Davidsen well in a field known for strong temperaments. 'You go into a room and there can be five or ten different countries and cultures represented,' she says, 'but we have one goal and that is to do the music that we have in front of us. So even if one person next to me denies Covid and one is homophobic... even though I would really love to have a conversation with the two of them and discuss their points, that's not the time for it.'

Plans for future seasons include more Italian repertory, notably a Met revival of Puccini's *Il tabarro*, according to a recent video conversation between Davidsen and general manager Peter Gelb.

'Of course, she can sing Brünnhilde,' says Eken. 'But she can sing Brünnhilde until she is 60, so wait with it. Let her enjoy something less heavy as long as she can. There are plenty of other things to do. It's outstanding what she is doing with Eva. I wouldn't speed the process up because this type of voice can last until she is 60, at least. Strauss songs, Sibelius – there's plenty for her to do. I think what she is doing in the coming years is spreading her wings to many parts of the repertoire and that's very wise.'

Davidsen recently moved from the yellow Oslo apartment to a house in Åsgårdstrand, a seaside town historically prized by artists including expressionist master Edvard Munch. Perhaps there is no more fitting heritage for a Wagnerian soprano to absorb. 'I have to accept my voice type and the repertoire that lies ahead of me does not contain a lot of comedy, unfortunately,' she says. 'But the German repertoire that I do suits my voice, and maybe my temper too. I don't know. I like the drama.'

Lise Davidsen's Grieg album with Leif Ove Andsnes is released on Decca, 7 January

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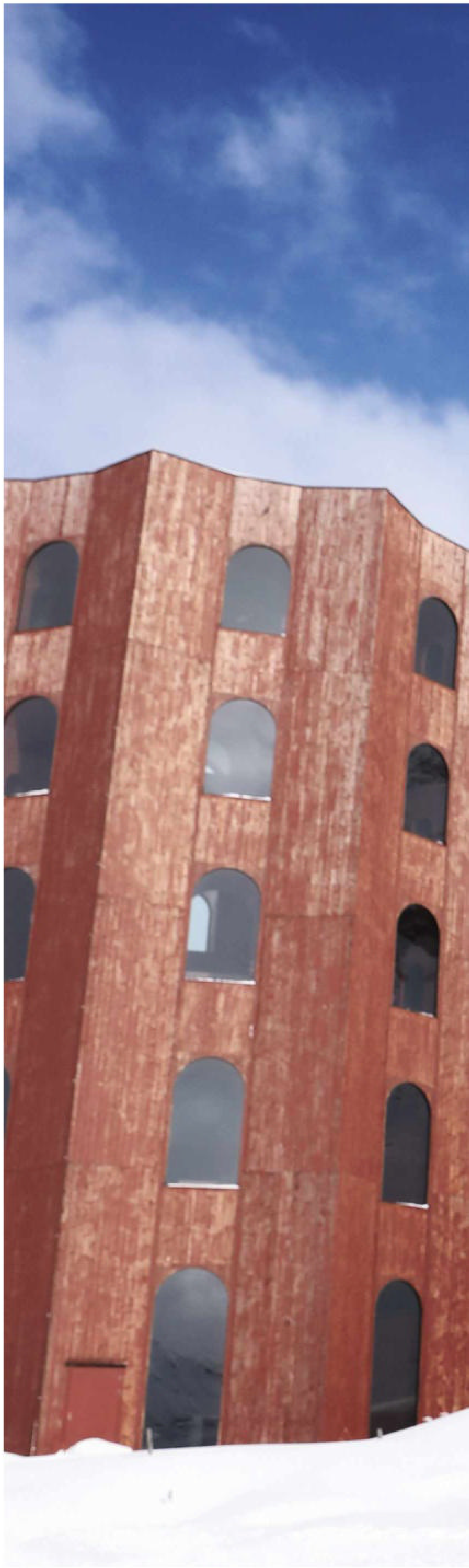
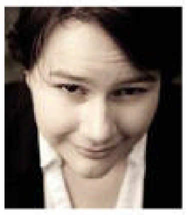


> It's so important that we try to put the spotlight on a song from different angles

THE BBC MUSIC MAGAZINE INTERVIEW

Benjamin Appl



As he prepares to make a new film of *Winterreise*, the German baritone tells **Katy Hamilton** why no performance of Schubert's great song cycle can ever be considered definitive

PHOTOGRAPHY: JUSTIN HESSION

As soon as he speaks, it is clear that Benjamin Appl has a madly overloaded schedule. Filming in Vienna, trips to Switzerland, teaching and concert tours... the weeks around our Zoom call are clearly jam-packed with activity, and although he's enjoying a brief visit to his parents, the days are full of discussions and planning sessions as he prepares for his next big project: a new film of Schubert's *Winterreise* for BBC 4. He pauses for a moment, smiling rather sheepishly, aware he's getting ahead of himself. 'Sorry,' he says; 'it's just very exciting!'

As, indeed, has been Appl's career to date. Born in Regensburg in eastern Bavaria, he was a chorister at the city's cathedral before studying business administration. While working on his degree, he auditioned to Augsburg Musikhochschule – and that opened doors via in-house tuition, theatre and opera experience and masterclass work. In 2009, he met the 84-year-old Dietrich Fischer-Dieskau at a masterclass in Austria and became the great German baritone's last pupil, working closely with him until Fischer-Dieskau's death in 2012. To learn from the man who made the first complete recording of Schubert's Lieder, not to mention his work on countless other concert and operatic projects, was clearly a serious and particular education. As one reviewer quipped in 2018 of a recent Brahms disc, 'this Appl didn't fall very far from Fischer-Dieskau's tree'.

It's hard to imagine better preparation for Appl's latest *Winterreise* project than those years of study with Fischer-Dieskau, whose recordings of Schubert's 1828 cycle with pianist Gerald Moore remain classics. 'I thought working with him on *Winterreise* would be the most extraordinary way of working and connecting,' Appl says, 'and that he would have so much to say about it.' Yet for reasons he still doesn't quite understand, his mentor was reluctant to discuss this particular work. Does he

regret that? Well, to some extent – but he points out the problems of being too tied to a certain approach. 'Everyone has such strong opinions about this piece, which is great but also tricky for a generation like us after 70 years of recordings, or even longer... It's hard to find your own way.'

Not, it should be said, that *Winterreise* is new for Appl. He estimates that he's sung it in concert between 60 and 70 times, with various different pianists, after a nerve-wracking first performance for which he was forced to learn it at breakneck speed. 'I just made a schedule – Monday, Tuesday... the concert was on Saturday – of which songs had to be learned on which day. So I was just sitting for hours each day writing out the texts over and over to learn them... it was quite stressful learning it the first time!'

He later recorded it as a member of the BBC's New Generation Artists scheme for young performers. Now, aged 39, he feels better placed to make something individual of the cycle, with the capable James Baillieu as his performing partner. They have already recorded the piece for Alpha Classics, the French label with which Appl has recently signed. And now there's the small matter of the film, in which Appl and Bailieu are working with award-winning film maker John Bridcut. Best-known for his thoughtful, incisive documentaries – most recently about Janet Baker and Bernard Haitink – Bridcut has a rather different challenge on his hands in filming this song cycle.

Winterreise's protagonist is heartbroken when we first meet him, leaving the home of his lover and potential fiancée since she has chosen, probably at her family's urging, a richer and socially superior partner. He sets off into the snow, past the tree where their initials are carved into the bark, and off into unknown places, storms and eerie landscapes. In certain senses, it's ideally cinematic: there are dramatic gales, icy fingers on window panes, will-o'-the-wisps and the enigmatic hurdy-gurdy player, whom our hero meets in the final song.

But Appl and Baillieu are not looking for a literal Hollywood realisation. Instead, they are setting their film in an isolated spot in Switzerland, the winding Julier Pass, with views out across the rugged Alps. In 2020, theatre director Giovanni Netzer oversaw the building of the Julierturm, a temporary theatre at the top of the Pass. The tower looks as if it has landed from outer space – the red wood of its dramatically angled walls divided by broad, arched windows on every level, pouring light into the building. This *Winterreise* will be geographically confined, then, to the inside and outside of the Julierturm. Appl and Baillieu are filming a 'straight' performance of the cycle inside the tower, and then setting up shots elsewhere in the area for particular songs in the cycle. It's the nitty-gritty of what will be going where, and how, and at what time of day, that he is in the midst of thrashing out over the phone with Bridcut.

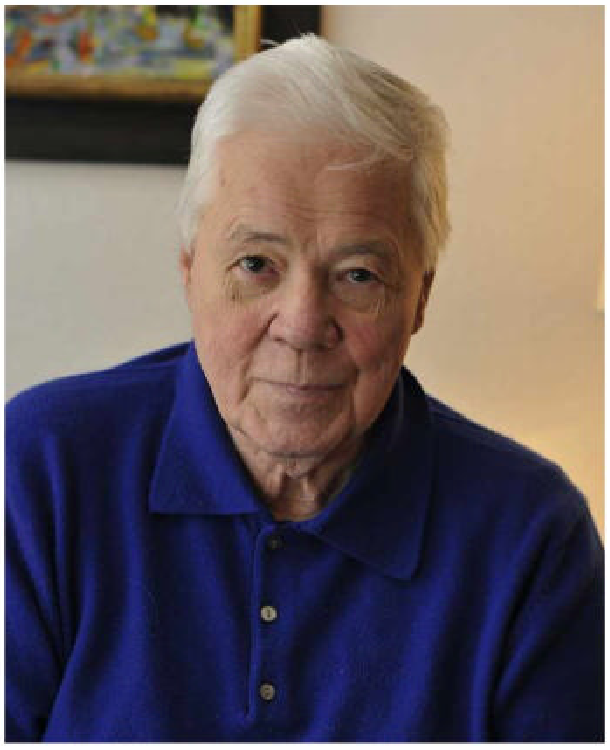
So how does one turn this dark piece – at times furious, at times melancholy – into something suitable for a TV audience? 'I think it's important as a performer to look for the light, bright moments,' he says. 'A friend of mine said he thinks *Winterreise* is a cycle about light. As an artist, you can

Swiss isolation: Benjamin Appl with pianist James Baillieu during filming at the Julierturm

GETTY, JUSTIN HESSION

'You can only paint a sun or moon in a picture that has a lot of darkness around'

Restless journey: (right) Julius von Leypold's *Wanderer in the Storm* (1835) has parallels with Schubert's *Winterreise*; (below right) poet Wilhelm Müller; (left) baritone Dietrich Fischer-Dieskau



only paint a sun or a moon in a picture if you have a lot of darkness around. I like this image.' And so, one hopes, will viewers, since as Appl points out, there's a chance to capture a broad audience for the film, from those who know it well to those who have never heard it before.

There are countless decisions to make – allowing for the exact circumstances of being in Switzerland with the film crew, not to mention dealing with whatever the weather throws at them. The pressure of making these decisions in such a short time, while filming in such a remote spot, seems to energise Appl more than it worries him – perhaps, given his initial experience of learning *Winterreise*, that shouldn't be a surprise. With Bailieu at the keyboard – who 'plays very beautifully' and is also, just as crucially for Appl, 'wonderfully supportive' – and Bridcut overseeing the project, he's in excellent hands. And then the composer concerned is Appl's favourite. 'With Schubert you have a very generous composer. He's really like a friend. He doesn't put much information [into the score]; it's just very honest and compassionate.'

I can't resist asking Appl about 'Der Leiermann', that unearthly closing song, as the hurdy-gurdy drones away in the sparse accompaniment and we are told of the strange man, barefoot on the ice, turning the instrument's handle even as humanity ignores him and dogs growl and snarl as they pass. What's it all about? Is this death? Madness? Who is this mysterious figure? Appl is initially careful in his reply – 'you can find another way in every evening of live performance… It depends how your inner journey is going'.

But then he explains his current theory: 'Sometimes it helps me as a performer to think that the Leiermann might be the singer himself. He talks about the dogs barking around him – are these the same dogs as before in "Im Dorfe" and also in the very beginning of the first song? Are these the same dogs that don't like this stranger? Maybe he just steps outside of himself in the last line of "Der Leiermann" to ask "why are you singing these songs?"'.

Appl fully expects others to disagree with this, but on one thing he is quite insistent: 'I think it's so important that we try to put the spotlight on the song and the situation from different angles. And we might have this one idea when we perform it one evening, but it resonates differently with every member of an audience.' One day, he plans to follow the final song in the cycle… with the first. The idea of the protagonist stuck in a loop of inescapable reflection evidently intrigues him greatly.

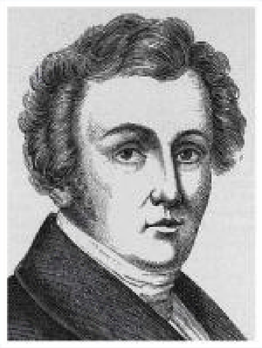
Appl's Alpha Classics recording of *Winterreise* is being released in early 2022, the first of a seven-album contract. He enthuses over the label's creative approach and enthusiasm for new repertoire – in fact, Alpha was initially reluctant to take *Winterreise*, as it's such a familiar and traditional work. The next few discs are already well planned. There's another collaboration with Bailieu, *Forbidden Fruit*, a programme of French, German and English repertoire 'from Renaissance folksongs to Marlene Dietrich'. And the third album will showcase the songs of the Hungarian György Kurtág, 95 this year and still busily composing. Appl met him three years ago and has regular sessions in Budapest, learning new repertoire for the disc, in which Kurtág himself will accompany him. 'After Fischer-Dieskau and pianist Graham Johnson, he's the third person who I find most inspirational.'

Perhaps it should come as no surprise that the final project I'm allowed to know about is a planned album to celebrate what would have been Fischer-Dieskau's 100th birthday in 2025. The programme will, crucially, feature several works written for Fischer-Dieskau himself. But of course – it goes without saying, really – there will also be music by Schubert.

Appl's 'Winter Journey' will be on BBC TV in late December and available on iPlayer

Frozen wanderings

Schubert's Winterreise



Winterreise ('Winter journey') is a setting of 24 poems by Wilhelm Müller (left), which Schubert composed in two parts – the first 12 in February 1827, the second 12 in October of that year. After completing the first dozen, the composer, who knew he was dying from syphilis, played them to a group of friends, describing them as 'a group of terrifying songs which I like more than anything I have done' and breaking down in tears afterwards.

The journey described over the 24 songs begins outside the house of a girl whom, back in May, our narrator had hoped to marry. With that hope now dashed, he writes 'Gute Nacht' (the name of the first song) on her gate before heading off through the snow. The twin subjects of rejected love and the prospect of death loom large throughout his musings, often accompanied by ominous imagery – a creaking weather vane ('Die Wetterfahne'), a crow ('Die Krähe') and, in 'Letzte Hoffnung' (Last hope), a falling leaf.

Schubert was still correcting the publisher's proofs of *Winterreise* when he died, aged 31, in November 1828. Müller was similarly ill-fated, dying from a heart attack in September 1827 at just 32.

A man on a mission: Alexander Scriabin wanted to save mankind; (far right) HP Blavatsky, whose books inspired him

ALAMY, GETTY

The great eccentric?

Scriabin is known today for his bizarre behaviour and outlandish visions – but his thinking was very much of his time, says Daniel Jaffé

Scriabin appears today a perfect example as to why listeners should not confuse a composer's work with his biography. Once revered, then subsequently reviled both in his own country and abroad, his late Piano Sonatas – concise, intense and eerily atmospheric – are now recognised as extraordinary masterpieces ahead of their time. Yet, on the 150th anniversary of his birth, the man himself is regularly regarded today, even by several Scriabin aficionados, as an embarrassment. This is, above all, for his apparent delusion that he was the Messiah – a concept seemingly the more ludicrous given his effete, bourgeois appearance and the fact he stood little more than five foot tall.

It does not help that by Russia's pre-Revolutionary Julian calendar (which, by the 20th century, ran 13 days behind the Gregorian calendar used in the rest of Europe), Scriabin was born on Christmas Day. His one-time close friend and biographer Leonid Sabaneyev added to the mythology by carelessly (or mischievously) claiming he died on Easter Day – Scriabin in fact died more than three weeks later. In 1904, while in Switzerland during his self-imposed exile from Russia, Scriabin admitted to preaching to Swiss peasants on the shore of Lake Geneva while he stood on a boat (having, some wags have added, failed to walk on water). In that same year, he confided to his friend Yulii Engel of his dream of creating an all-embracing *Mystery* 'which could replace the old outdated Gospel'. Scriabin, recalled Engel, elaborated: '"A special temple has to be built for it, maybe here," – and without looking he took in the panorama of mountains with an undefined gesture – "but maybe far from here, in India".' This, it appears, was his first confession of his ambition to write his notorious and never fulfilled final magnum opus.

Less than a year later, Scriabin was reading HP Blavatsky's *The Key to Theosophy* in French translation, a book which seemed to further fuel his ambition for his *Mystery* project. Early in 1906, while in Bogliasco on the Italian coast, he met the Marxist philosopher Georgii Plekhanov, who had moved to Italy for the sake of his health. Plekahnov's wife, Rozaliya, witnessed a lively conversation between her husband and Scriabin during one of their walks; as they approached a bridge, which spanned a river much reduced by the warm weather, the composer claimed that he could jump off the bridge and, through 'power of will', not be dashed on the rocks below, but would float unharmed in mid-air. To which Plekhanov dryly responded, 'Try it!'

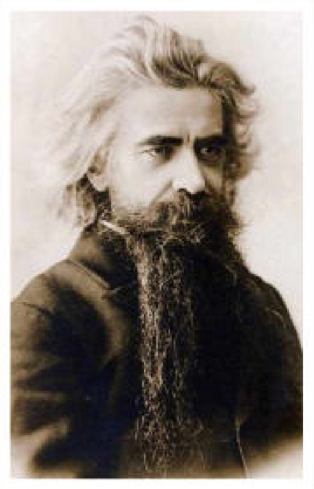
Scriabin did not oblige, though perhaps not simply due to pragmatism overruling a delusional idea. Scriabin and Plekhanov had, in the words of Rozaliya, held their discussions in a 'teasing' and 'jocular manner' and Scriabin's proposal on the bridge was a Symbolist concept – an example of the artistic/philosophical movement by which emotions are expressed by metaphorical images and language (see p38). Much later, Plekhanov confessed: 'Our daily arguments at every meeting not only did not alienate us from each other, but even contributed a good deal to our mutual closeness.' Clearly there was a strong mutual respect, though their respective philosophies were utterly different – albeit, both in their different ways wished to find redemption for their fellow men. Plekhanov remembered: 'It was very pleasant to dispute

"Blavatsky's *Key to Theosophy* inspired Scriabin's *Mystery*, a work 'which could replace the old outdated Gospel,' he said"

Influential thinkers: (left) the symbolist poet Vyacheslav Ivanov, a close friend of Scriabin's, hiking in the 1890s; (below) Vladimir Solovyov; (bottom) Arthur Schopenhauer

Symbolist gestures

Four thinkers who influenced Scriabin

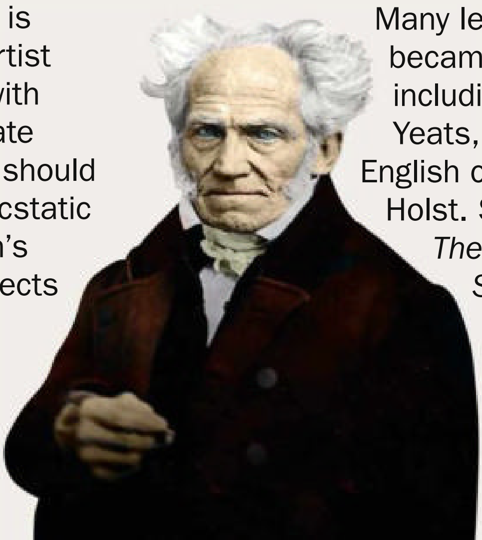


Arthur Schopenhauer *(1788-1860)*
German philosopher (pictured below), who laid the foundations of the Symbolist movement with his *The World as Will and Representation,* a work every intelligent Russian took time to read, including Scriabin – witness his extensively annotated copy. Schopenhauer's claim that 'Music gives the innermost kernel preceding all form, of the heart of things' clearly inspired Scriabin.

Vladimir Solovyov *(1853-1900)*
A major influence on the early Russian Symbolist movement, Solovyov (pictured above) believed that art was a means to 'the metamorphosis of physical life into spiritual life'. He also taught: 'For true creation, it is essential that the artist should not remain with his clear and separate consciousness, but should emerge from it, in ecstatic inspiration.' Scriabin's *Poem of Ecstasy* reflects that concept.

Vyacheslav Ivanov *(1866-1949)*
Symbolist poet, classical scholar and essayist (pictured top), a friend of Scriabin's from 1909. Ivanov introduced the composer to the philosophy of Solovyov, while his own concept of a Dionysian, collective drama that would unite mankind was an important inspiration for Scriabin's *Mystery.* Both Ivanov and Scriabin believed Wagner approached music's transcendental potential – Wagner's *Tristan und Isolde* is a clear influence on Scriabin's *Divine Poem*.

HP Blavatsky *(1831-1891)*
Russian émigré founder of the US-based Theosophical Society, which claimed to be promoting an ancient wisdom preserved by spiritual adepts known as Masters mostly based around Tibet and India. Many leading creative figures became involved in Theosophy, including Thomas Edison, WB Yeats, Kandinsky and the English composers Foulds and Holst. Scriabin read Blavatsky's *The Key to Theosophy* and *Secret Doctrine* with great interest.

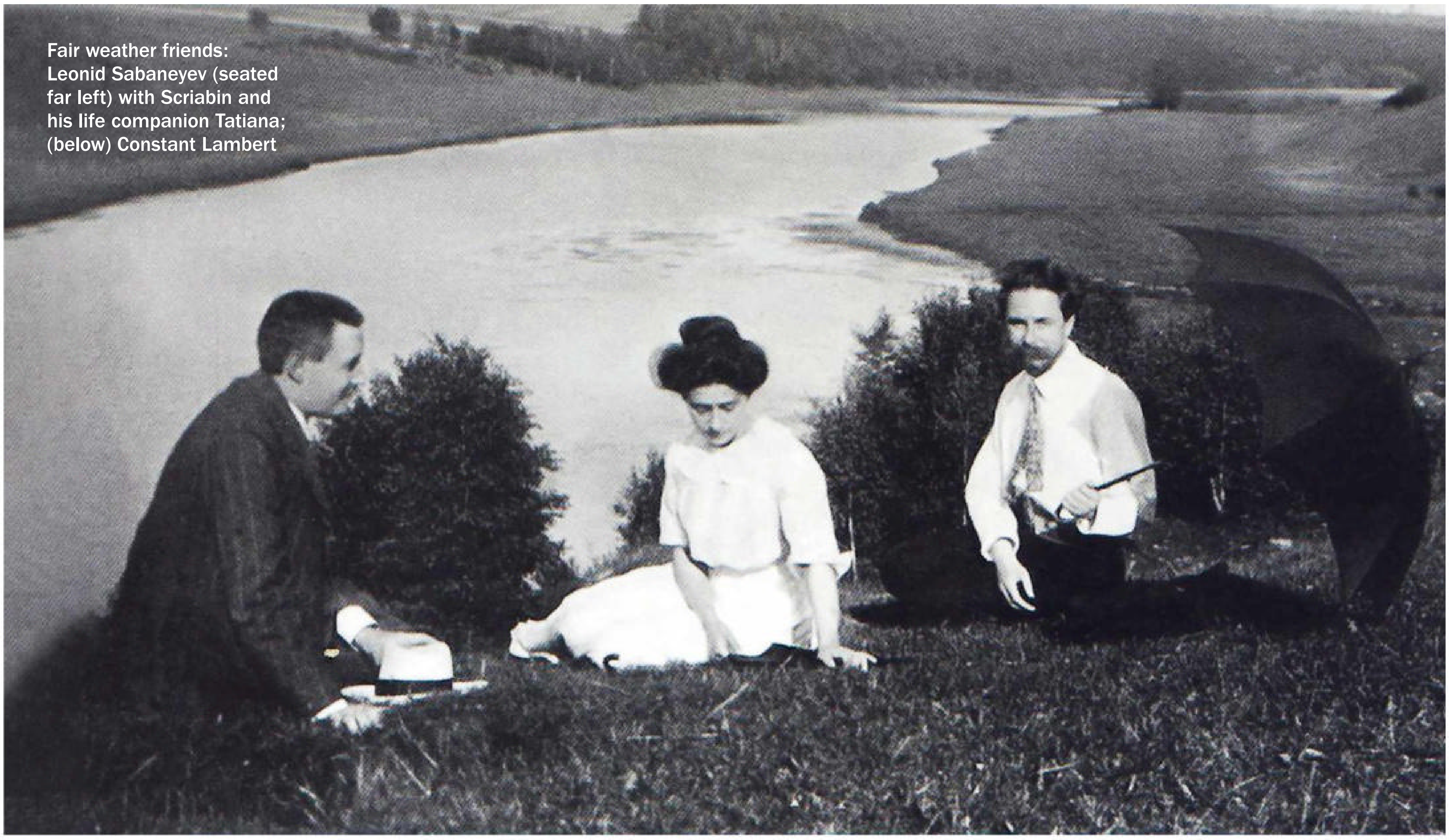


with Alexander Nikolaevich [Scriabin] because he had the ability to assimilate his opponent's thought with surprising speed and fullness. When I met him in Bogliasco, he was completely unacquainted with the materialistic view of history of Marx and Engels. I drew his attention to the important philosophical significance of this view. When I met with him in Switzerland a few months later I saw that, while he had by no means turned into a supporter of historical materialism, he had managed to understand its essence so well that he could work with this doctrine considerably better than many "hard-boiled" Marxists both in Russia and abroad.'

It is rather sad, if revealing, that such a testimony came from what might be thought a disinterested source, whereas the most damning portrayal originated from someone who had, for a time, wholeheartedly shared Scriabin's dreams and outlook in life. Leonid Sabaneyev was a close friend and associate of Scriabin's in the final five years of the composer's life, visiting him almost every day. Indeed, the pianist Alexander Goldenweiser, another friend of Scriabin's, described Sabaneyev as 'not just a passionate disciple but, so to speak, a Scriabinite prophet'.

A man of considerable intelligence who had had some compositional training, Sabaneyev was in a better position than most to understand Scriabin both as a thinker and as a composer. His biography, *Reminiscences of Scriabin*, offers tantalising glimpses of the final work Scriabin had in mind but failed to commit to paper before his untimely death. This was not the long-planned *Mystery*, which had threatened to overwhelm Scriabin's creative and intellectual resources, but the *Preliminary Action*, an 'interim work' which his close friend, the symbolist poet Vyacheslav Ivanov, had suggested could be written as preparation for those who would participate in (not merely listen to) the *Mystery*.

Sabaneyev wrote: 'Alexander Nikolayevich began to play something new, "different", unfamiliar to me... It was, I recall, a fairly long episode of ineffable beauty, in the music of which I immediately caught something in common with that same famous prelude, Op. 74 No. 2, which had left such a deep impression in me the previous season... There were mysterious, lingering harmonies, full of some otherworldly sweetness and sharpness, changing against the background of a static bass in fifths... The impression of this, perhaps the most powerful of all I had heard from Scriabin, was stronger even than the previous impressions of the Third Symphony, of the Sixth Sonata, of *Prometheus*...'



Fair weather friends: Leonid Sabaneyev (seated far left) with Scriabin and his life companion Tatiana; (below) Constant Lambert

After Scriabin's death in 1915 from blood poisoning, due to a septic carbuncle that had formed on his upper lip, Sabaneyev suddenly and viciously turned against his former idol, maybe out of chagrin for having fallen so fully under the composer's sway. In 1927, after emigrating from the Soviet Union, Sabaneyev published a book *Modern Russian Composers*. By then, he had immersed himself fully in the then highly fashionable theories of the Italian criminologist and phrenologist Cesare Lombroso which – in Sabaneyev's own words – had led to his 'studying, in Lombroso's manner, the mysterious relationship between genius and mental disease'. Sabaneyev admitted this not in his chapter on Scriabin, but in a chapter relating to another composer, Samuil Feinberg; not surprisingly, this admission eluded Scriabin scholars until researcher Simon Nicholls, in his *The Notebooks of Alexander Skryabin*, highlighted Sabaneyev's comment and its significance.

As Nicholls noted, Lombroso promoted a now discredited theory of 'genius as degeneration', claiming that 'signs of degeneration are found more frequently in men of genius than even in the insane'. Such signs included 'smallness of the body', 'precocity' (which Lombroso branded 'morbid and atavistic') and 'grandiose monomania'. To Sabaneyev, evidently, Lombroso's prognosis appeared a neat fit for Scriabin; as such, he described his former idol in *Modern Russian Composers* as 'the first

GETTY, ALAMY

"The climaxes of Scriabin's *Poème de l'Extase* are angry waves beating vainly at the breakwater of our intelligence"

"consistent paranoiac" to reduce musical insanity to a peculiar sort of scheme and even to a theory'. In his final article about Scriabin, published in 1966, Sabaneyev described the composer as a 'mad dreamer, a psychologically sick man even in his appearance'.

With even a once-devoted acolyte writing about Scriabin in those terms, it's no surprise that later scholars followed suit. But Sabaneyev didn't stop at character assassination. In 1927, he wrote of Scriabin's work: 'in his music we discern a dream of Titanism, the dream of greatness and tragedy, but not greatness itself, not Titanism itself, examples of which have been given us by geniuses like Beethoven or Wagner.' That judgement was widely echoed, not least by Constant Lambert in his best-selling tome *Music Ho!* (published 1934): 'The climaxes of Scriabin's *Poème de l'Extase* are angry waves beating vainly at the breakwater of our intelligence.'

The tide has since turned in Scriabin's favour, at least as a composer. Yet Sabaneyev's poisonous invective against his character still has currency – given Sabaneyev's special relationship with the composer, coupled with the daunting task facing anyone contemplating getting to grips with Scriabin's actual worldview and the literature he read, this is hardly surprising. Only now – since Nicholls's first publication of a reliable English translation of Scriabin's own writings – are we perhaps getting to grips with this extraordinary, eccentric but certainly far from insane genius.

A sustainable sound

Claire Jackson finds how instrument manufacturers are using new materials and production methods for the good of the environment

'Going green' is no longer just how you feel when someone else gets a coveted concert ticket. As our understanding of climate change improves, venues, artists and audiences are seeking eco-friendly ways of making music. Milan's La Scala is set to install solar panels on the roof of its new office tower; Sydney Opera House has built an artificial reef in its surrounding waters to nurture marine life; and Glyndebourne has its own wind turbine. Shortly before the pandemic, HarrisonParrott, the artist management agency, announced it was reconsidering how best to organise travel for its musicians, with some, such as violinist Patricia Kopatchinskaja, promising to journey by rail rather than air whenever possible.

> "Elite bow makers favour a particular tree found only in Brazil, which could be wiped out in a decade"

Even musical instruments themselves are coming under scrutiny, as makers and players strive to ensure materials are sustainable and processes are responsible. Yamaha, for example, has a newly established team monitoring the organisation's use of timber, particularly that from rare trees such as African blackwood, which is used for woodwind instruments.

Once an instrument has been made, it is important that it has the longest lifespan possible. The same guidelines apply as elsewhere – the

Finite resource: (far left) a Pernambuco tree; (left) a violin bow made with Pernambuco wood, championed by (below) violinist Viktoria Mullova and cellist Matthew Barley

most environmentally friendly items are the ones that already exist and so buying second-hand and repairing old instruments is encouraged. But even those that mature with age need ancillary pieces – such as bows – replaced regularly. 'Older bows lose their flexibility,' explains cellist Matthew Barley. 'I watched [violinist] Maxim Vengerov try out a bow once and the first thing he checked was the bounciness.'

Violinist Viktoria Mullova agrees: 'Even if you're playing a Stradivarius, the type of bow will impact on the sound. I know immediately when the bow touches the strings whether it will work for me.' It all sounds a little bit like Hogwarts students visiting Ollivanders to choose their wands. But, while the wandmakers in Harry Potter could chose from a variety of woods – cherry, blackthorn, willow and, famously, elder – elite bowmakers favour one particular tree found only in Brazil.

Pernambuco (also known as brazilwood) was championed in the mid-18th century by bowmaker François Xavier Tourte and violinist Giovanni Battista Viotti, who declared 'Le violon, c'est l'archet' ('the violin, it is the bow'). Pernambuco is now used by makers across the world, favoured for its rare ability to hold a fixed curve. But illegal deforestation has meant that pernambuco is now an endangered species, and Brazil's Atlantic Forest, the tree's native and only habitat, has shrunk to just six per cent of its original size. In 2018, over 20,000 violin bows made with illegally logged wood from the black market were seized. It's likely that without intervention, the pernambuco could be wiped out within a decade.

Barley and Mullova are among a collective of musicians and makers who are campaigning to raise awareness of the plight of the pernambuco. Trees of Music (treesofmusic.org) aims to plant 50,000 pernambuco saplings, reforest 150 water springs and train 70 farmers to cultivate sustainable pernambuco. It seems too obvious to ask, but can't we simply use a different material? 'Bowmakers have experimented,' says Barley. 'A steel bow was invented in the early 20th century, and I have a carbon-fibre bow which works well on my electric cello, but so far the bows made of anything other than pernambuco are not of the same quality. Pernambuco is incredibly strong yet has this amazing elasticity.' For added complexity, pernambuco is also sometimes used for tailpieces and, in the case of Mullova's violin, the chin rest.

It is not only pernambuco that is in short supply. Global levels of zinc, used in brass instruments, are rapidly diminishing. Reflecting that the trombone hadn't changed much since its early beginnings as a sackbut some 400 years ago, Steven Greenall and the co-founders of Warwick Music set about developing a new model – out of plastic. 'The trombone is the heaviest instrument to be held with one hand,' says Greenall, who has played the instrument since childhood. 'We wanted to make it lighter, more accessible and ultimately, more sustainable.' Together with his colleagues, Greenall came up with the pBone, a brightly coloured plastic trombone that has since been sold to over 250,000 aspiring players. 'Eighty per cent of children in the UK who start learning the trombone play our instruments,' says Greenall.

Although single-use plastic is enemy number one, plastic per se isn't necessarily bad news. 'We encourage people to reuse our instruments and we offer repairs, frequently with free replacement parts,' says Greenall. 'When the instrument eventually reaches the end of its life, it can then be recycled.' At present, the pBone – alongside the pCornet, pTrumpet, pBugle and pBuzz (an entry-level generic 'brass' instrument) – is made from new plastic, but there are plans to use recycled material. 'The next phase of the journey is to be able to turn a broken garden chair into a trumpet,' says Greenall. 'We're currently working with Coventry and Warwickshire County Council to use raw recycled material in instruments. You can buy ocean-waste plastic, but we need to know exactly what goes into our products, especially as they are used by children.'

This is less of an issue when the instrument does not need to be blown. Several companies have started selling guitar plectrums made from recycled plastic, and percussionists have been experimenting with sounds created from plastic waste (see p42). And East Neuk Festival in Scotland has planned a large-scale series of community beach cleans from which

Material gain: Steven Greenall's pBone is made from recyclable plastic

CASSIO VASCONCELLOS, GETTY, ALAMY

Recycled repertoire

Waste-free music-making

Funky junk

Members of the Junk Orchestra, founded by Saul Eisenberg, make their own instruments from rubbish, creating curious percussive sounds dubbed 'rock 'n' recycle'. The ensemble leads workshops in schools and healthcare settings and is a big hit with youngsters, having appeared on the popular CBeebies programme *Justin's House*. See thejunkorchestra.co.uk.

Vegging out

The Vienna-based Vegetable Orchestra (pictured above) performs on a bizarre lineup that includes a cucumberphone, carrot flute, pepper horn, pumpkin triangle, onion maracas and a leek violin. There's no waste from this edible ensemble: after performances, a chef turns the instruments into soup.

The keys to happiness

Though piano making in the UK has declined dramatically over the past few decades, during the 20th century dozens of manufacturers created hundreds of instruments for domestic music making. While many of these instruments are beyond musical repair, plenty are finding new life through upcycled projects – for instance, an ancient upright makes a perfect drinks cabinet-cum-bar.

GETTY

New piano perspective: Sarah Nicholls and her Erard reconfigured as 'Inside-Out Piano II'

rubbish will be used to make instruments for a 100-piece ensemble – the Fantastic Plastic Parade Band was due to form in 2020, and the festival hopes to revisit the project.

'Tickling the plastics' may not sound quite as poetic as 'tickling the ivories', but few pianos in Europe and the US have keys made from elephant tusks any more. Most of the major manufacturers, including Bösendorfer, Yamaha and Steinway, use a synthetic key top that most pianists say offers a better touch than ivory. It

> 'It's difficult to hear the difference between a real brass instrument and a plastic one'

also has the added benefit of not yellowing over age – or inciting illegal poaching. However, despite long-term campaigns to protect elephants and the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES), ivory is still used by a minority of piano makers who sell to countries including China. CITES has subsequently limited use of other natural materials such as rosewood, a popular choice for guitar makers. Using the wood is not outlawed entirely, but there are severe restrictions. Obvious material alternatives like ebony and mahogany are also on the risk list, so makers are currently experimenting with the likes of ovangkol, ziricote and maple.

Often, using a different material means rethinking some aspects of the original instrument. 'We had to reinvent the internal system of the trombone,' says Greenall, whose instruments produce a surprisingly effective sound. 'Unless you're a professional musician it's difficult to tell the difference between a plastic "brass" instrument and an original.' Although Warwick Music's p-range is aimed at the education market, orchestral brass sections may one day be replaced by plastics. 'One of our instruments was used during a rehearsal at a professional British orchestra and the conductor didn't notice,' smiles Greenall, refusing to disclose either the ensemble or the maestro in question.

The need to recycle is also helping to inspire new configurations of existing instruments. Pianist Sarah Nicholls has reworked her 1900 Erard, 'a lovely but very old and dying instrument', so that the casing sits vertically rather than horizontally: this allows the strings to be used alongside the keys, creating a new set of timbres. Nicholls is now raising funds to enable the production of a new instrument, dubbed the 'Standing Grand' (www.futurepiano.co.uk), which – she hopes – will appeal to musicians with small living spaces who are intrigued by the new soundworld it offers.

Meanwhile, Trees of Music has shown another form of enterprise, one familiar since the pandemic: its promotional video presents a 'patchwork' virtual string orchestra made up of leading string players – including Barley, Mullova and her double bassist son Misha Mullov-Abbado – playing an arrangement of *Lua Branca* and *Yayá Fazenda* by Chiquinha Gonzaga, Brazil's first woman conductor. 'We owe so much to a Brazilian tree,' concludes Barley, 'We must work together to protect it.'

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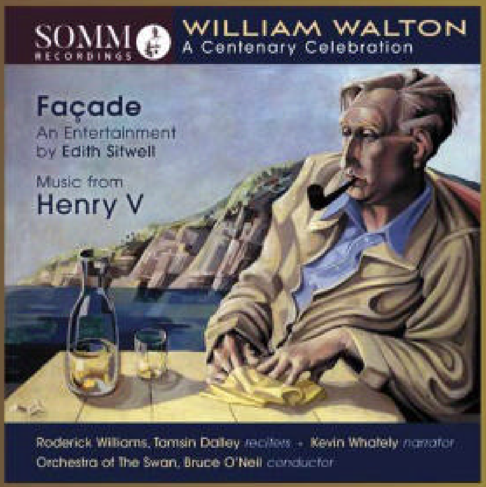

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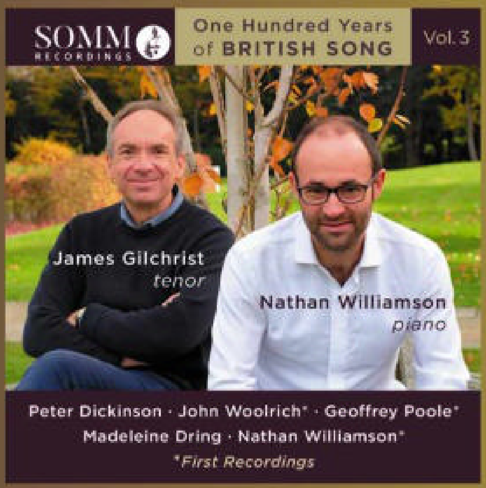

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Taking Sides

It's 60 years since *West Side Story* first lit up movie screens and, as Steven Spielberg's new vision of the musical legend is unveiled, Michael Beek takes a look to see if that classic film has met its match

Director Robert Wise and choreographer Jerome Robbins were the first joint winners of the Best Director Oscar for their 1961 take on *West Side Story*. That was just one of ten Academy Awards the legendary film musical would win that night at the Santa Monica Civic Auditorium. The original musical, by Robbins, Arthur Laurents, Leonard Bernstein and Stephen Sondheim, broke new ground when it premiered on Broadway in 1957, but it was the big screen version that truly established this tragic love story as a worldwide favourite. In the 60 years that have passed since the film's premiere, its status as a masterpiece has only become more deeply rooted. So it's a brave artist who feels able to take on this musical giant and reimagine it for the 21st century. Luckily for us, visionary director Steven Spielberg is such an artist.

Spielberg has wanted to make a musical for a very long time. His Peter Pan film, *Hook* (1991), was originally envisaged as such – John Williams and the late Leslie Bricusse even wrote a clutch of songs for it – but the film ended up going down a more traditional route.

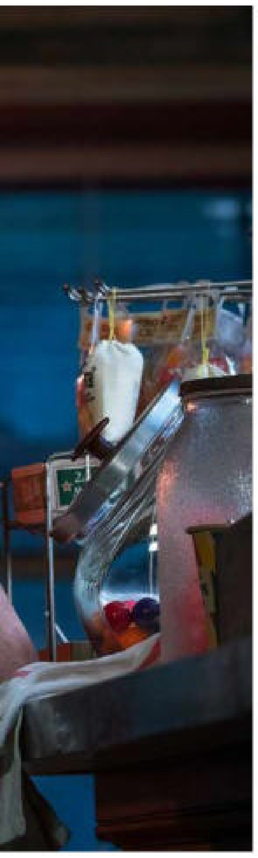
The appetite for film musicals waned over the decades since the genre's glory days, but that has changed in recent years thanks to the likes of *The Greatest Showman*. As a result, Spielberg felt it was time to make his dream come true with a musical he has loved since he was a kid – he apparently drove his family mad singing songs from the original cast recording, songs he knew by heart.

Joining him to bring *West Side Story* to the screen is a team of high-profile artists, each with a huge passion for the show, from Oscar-nominated screenwriter Tony Kushner and arranger David Newman to New York City Ballet choreographer Justin Peck and celebrated conductor Gustavo Dudamel.

On screen is a young cast, crucially featuring Latin actors, singers and dancers, comprised of unknowns and more established names. For the key roles of Tony and Maria, Spielberg paired Ansel Elgort (*Baby Driver*) and newcomer Rachel Zegler. Zegler, who truly lights up the screen in her debut role, was just finishing High School when she was first encouraged by a friend to audition, a process that would take a year and include multiple readings and screen tests.

NIKO TAVERNISE/TWENTIETH CENTURY FOX FILM CORPORATION, GETTY

Bright young things: Ansel Elgort and Rachel Zegler lead a new cast of Jets and Sharks; (below) Steven Spielberg sets up a scene on location in New York City; (below left) Rita Moreno as Valentina



With a large cast to assemble, thousands of young actors, singers and dancers from around the world were considered for the roles, including the other key couple in the story, Bernardo and Anita – played in knockout performances by David Alvarez and Ariana DeBose.

One person who can relate to their journey is Rita Moreno, who played Anita in the original film. She recalls her own quest for the role. 'I worked my little Puerto Rican ass off auditioning for it. I did in-person readings and then I did screen tests. I worked so hard to get it; I auditioned for the singing, I auditioned for the dancing. I was up to my behind in auditions. Every little dark-haired girl in California was auditioning for this.'

Moreno went on to win an Oscar for her performance, and she is the only original cast member to feature in the new film. In a

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1. As rated by Willis Towers Watson. 2. MSCI All Country World Index.

Dancing in the street: Ariana DeBose (centre) as Anita and others perform 'America'; (below) David Newman

slight change to the story, she plays Valentina, proprieter of Doc's store and his widow. It's a really beautiful performance, but it wasn't just in front of the camera where Moreno made an impact, for she also served as an executive producer. As she reveals, her experience of the work was put to good use, even by the music team.

'I remember they were pre-recording the Mambo and I said the tempo was too fast, the dancers can do it, but the steps aren't going to be as clear and clean if they're struggling with tempo. So, Gustavo (Dudamel) said, "Well, I just love this tempo." I said, "I don't blame you. Ultimately, it's a question of how are the dancers going to look?" It was decided that we would go just under that tempo.'

Leonard Bernstein's music is, of course, the heart and soul of *West Side Story*, and the composer's original vision remains a cornerstone of the new film. Spielberg looked to his long-term composer John Williams for guidance. Credited as music consultant, Williams recommended Dudamel to take the baton, the New York Philharmonic to perform and David Newman to look after Bernstein's music.

A gifted composer, conductor and arranger, Newman is part of a Hollywood film music

"My father loved *West Side Story* and it's one of the things I remember listening to with him..."

dynasty begun by his father, the great Alfred Newman – one time head of music at Twentieth Century Fox. As it happens, he has a long history with *West Side Story*. 'My father loved *West Side Story* and it's one of the things I remember listening to with him, so I was familiar with it from the get-go.' But, as he explains, it wasn't just youthful appreciation; this is music he knows better than most. 'Musical theatre was a big thing in public high schools in the late '60s and early '70s, and one year we did *West Side Story*, which meant we worked on it for three or four months. I was the rehearsal pianist, so I played for the choreography rehearsals and the vocal rehearsals. I knew it backwards and forwards. And then in my 20s, a group of us formed a kind of semi-pro group and, again, we did *West Side Story*. I was the music director and got to conduct, and that was three months of rehearsal.' The music returned to Newman's desk yet again in 2011, when he prepared and premiered the live-to-picture concert of the original film, followed by some 50 performances.

Though more than familiar with the material, Newman's task was relatively complex in that he had to work with a wider team to take what Bernstein had written and re-fashion it for the new film, as he explains. 'It was a peculiar

NIKO TAVERNISE/TWENTIETH CENTURY FOX FILM CORPORATION, GETTY

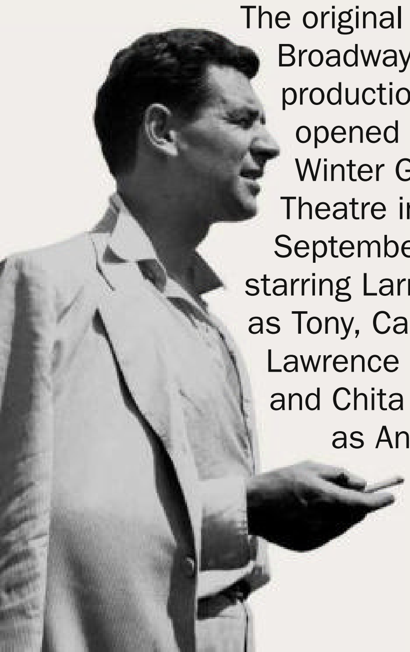
Kicking: Jerome Robbins and cast

East Side Story

The show's beginnings

Back in the late 1940s, Jerome Robbins envisioned a *Romeo and Juliet*-inspired story about clashes between Jewish and Catholic gangs on Manhattan's Lower East Side. Writer Arthur Laurents and composer Leonard Bernstein (below) were keen to pursue the idea, but other things got in the way. It wasn't until the mid-1950s that the project began to move. The story shifted its focus across to the Upper West Side, where communities were being uprooted by gentrification and torn apart by social disquiet. A young lyricist called Stephen Sondheim was brought in to join Bernstein in writing the songs for what was now called *West Side Story.*

Bernstein was in the middle of writing *Candide* at the time and it's said that the music for 'Gee, Officer Krupke' and 'One Hand, One Heart' was originally destined for that. The original Broadway production opened at the Winter Garden Theatre in September 1957, starring Larry Kert as Tony, Carol Lawrence as Maria and Chita Rivera as Anita.



Settling the score: (left) conductor Gustavo Dudamel and director Steven Spielberg at one of the recording sessions in New York; (bottom) one of the original posters for the 1961 film starring Natalie Wood and Richard Beymer

kind of job, because there was a lot of people involved; Garth Edwin Sunderland at the Bernstein Estate, Jeanine Tesori, who did the vocals. Stephen Sondheim was involved because there was some re-focusing of things.'

Those things include Rita Moreno's Valentina singing the iconic 'Somewhere', which becomes an emotional prayer of hope after the deaths of Bernardo and Riff. 'I Feel Pretty' is moved along slightly in the narrative, Maria's happiness now all the more tragic, unaware as she is of what has just happened at the fight. 'Cool' is also moved, given to Tony as a means of trying to talk his friends out of a violent confrontation. Such changes work well for the story, but Bernstein's music was sacrosanct, as Newman continues. 'We did not want to modernise or rearrange it. Of course, we had to do some of that, but we didn't want it to be ostentatious. My job was to ensure that everything used Leonard Bernstein's vision; that was sort of the North Star of the film.'

Like any film, music was required to provide dramatic underscore, so Newman had to be creative in providing such moments, however few and far between they were. 'The last third of the film needed some score cues, but you'd be surprised how little there is. There wasn't much in the '61 movie either, because there's so much music. There's a lot of under-dialogue music in the show that we used, and that maybe needed elongating here and there. We took things from various places and put it in where we needed it.'

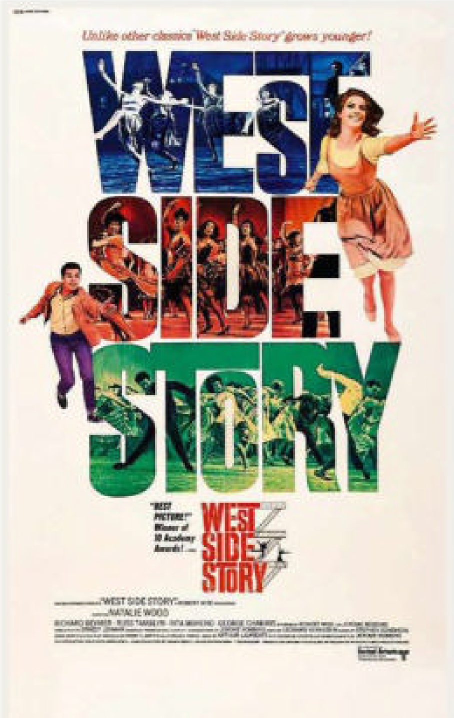
GETTY, CHRIS LEE/ TWENTIETH CENTURY FOX FILM CORPORATION

It was the original 1957 show's score that formed the basis of the new film's musical palette, as opposed to the version which was prepared for the original film by Hollywood legends Johnny Green, Irwin Kostal and Sid Ramin (Ramin also worked on the show). They won an Oscar for their work on the film, though it's said Bernstein wasn't entirely pleased with its epic scale. So, as Newman shares, it was a very conscious creative choice to think a little smaller this time around. '*West Side Story* in '61 had a gigantic orchestra; for the Prologue they had eight xylophones and eight pianos – that was sort of the way films were being scored in the '60s. So we went back a bit to the Broadway orchestration; of course, it's a film so it needs a little more scope, but some of that is done with recording technique.'

Gustavo Dudamel has said it felt 'right' to work with the New York Philharmonic on the music, given their connection to Bernstein who was music director from 1958-69. Of course the Covid-19 pandemic hit in the Spring of 2020, right in the middle of post-production. That meant some of the music had to necessarily be recorded in Los Angeles, and who better than Dudamel's own LA Phil? It all makes for what is a spectacular musical backdrop, and David Newman was delighted with the results. 'Both orchestras were so happy and wonderful to work with, and this would not have happened ten to 15 years ago; they would not have enjoyed playing it. There has been a sea change in these orchestras, in terms of their performance of, and how they view, film music.'

He's also proud of the soundtrack album, as he continues. 'I know every recording and I would posit that this is the quintessential recording of *West Side Story*. We wanted to make the album like a radio drama, a dramatic document for what *West Side Story* should sound like.'

So, has the original *West Side Story* met its match? Nothing will take away the impact of that gutsy, stylish and frankly iconic 1961 film, but Spielberg's 2021 version has a scope and sheen (visually and musically) never afforded this greatest and most tragic of love stories. This film gets under the skin of the characters and their situation far more deeply. And while there's nostalgia at its heart, it has a contemporary glow and a gnawing, uncomfortable truth in its message that lingers.



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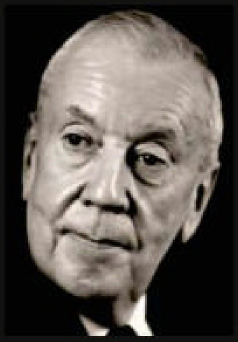
Roderick Williams © Simon van Boxtel



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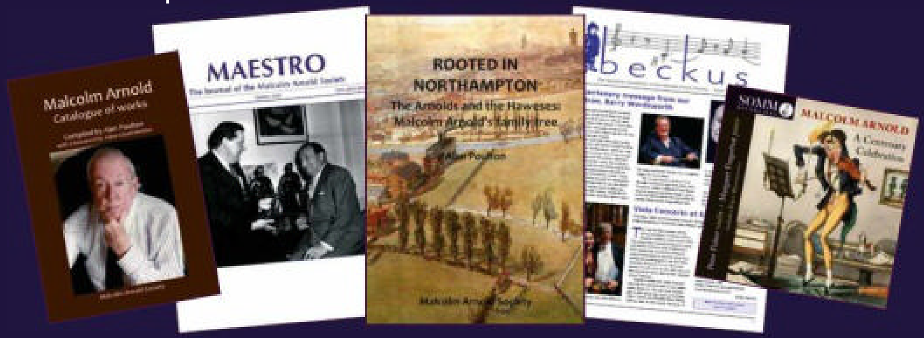

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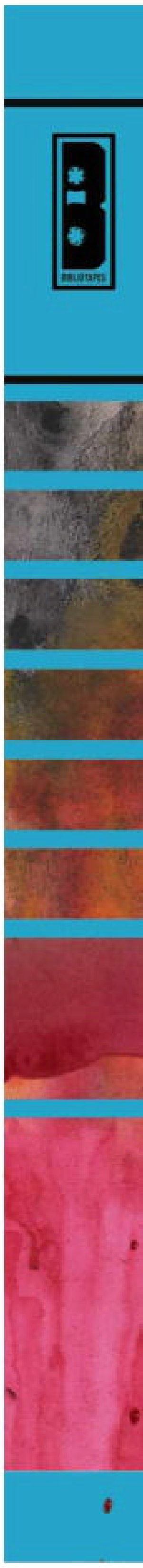


Chapter and verse

While films have long enjoyed lavish scores, books have remained silent. Freya Parr meets the composers bringing classic novels to life

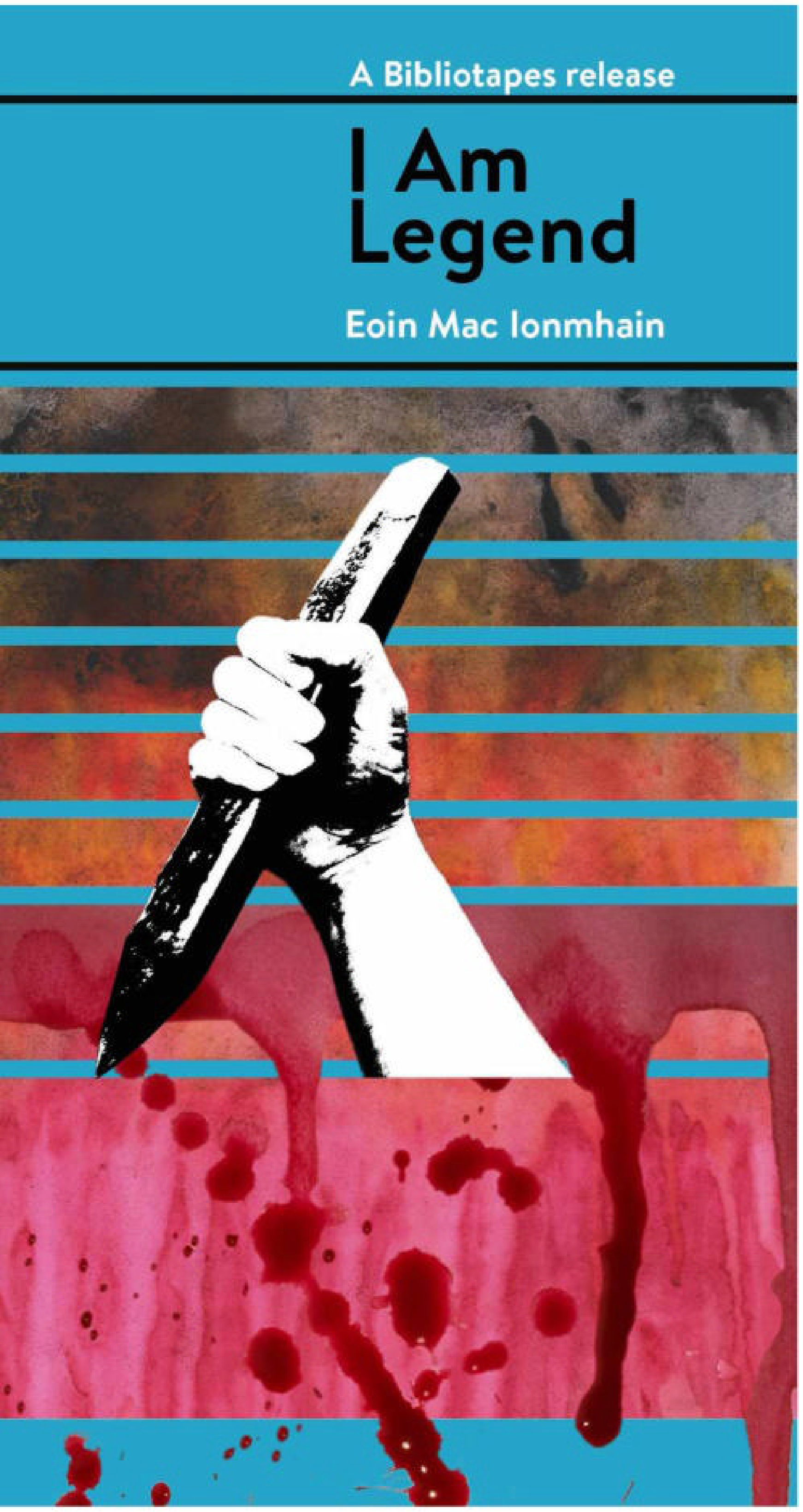
A decade or so ago, audio storytelling was in the doldrums. Radio stations were cutting drama from their budgets, while audiobooks, involving little more than a single narrator in compressed MIDI format, were waning in popularity. Children might have been lulled to sleep with the dulcet tones of Stephen Fry reading *Harry Potter*, but that was where it started and finished.

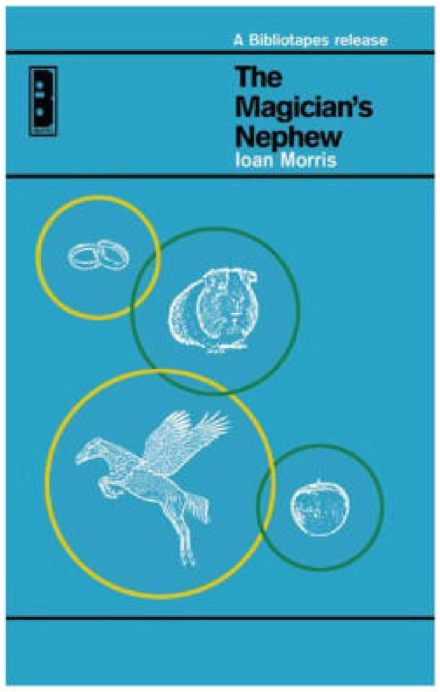
Now, Penguin Random House are releasing an audiobook of George Saunders's Booker Prize-winning novel *Lincoln in the Bardo* with an A-list Hollywood cast of 166 different narrators, while Audible has just released a version of *Sleeping Beauty* with Stephen Fry and a full cast, with music from the London Symphony Orchestra. Podcasters are being commissioned to write memoirs and novels in their droves, with publication in audiobook format being favoured over ebook and hardback equivalents. Many of these releases offer bonus audio content and, in the case of successful podcaster Adam Buxton, exclusive music and jingles. The advent of high-budget audio drama and the growing interest in true crime and narrative-led podcasts means our standards have been raised. We now expect stories to be much more immersive.

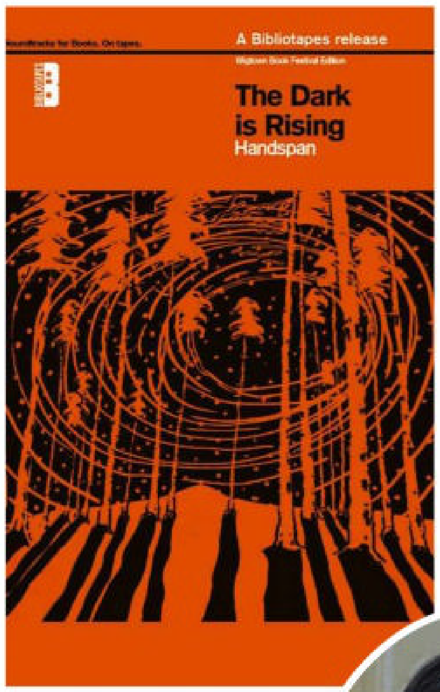
> "It's amazing how many references to sound and music you'll find in a book once you start looking"

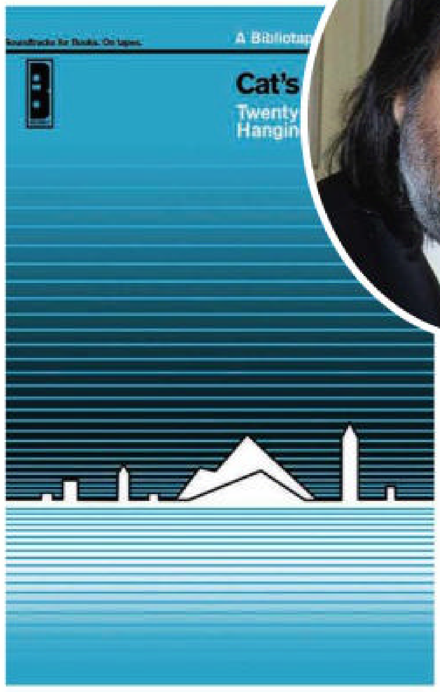
For one tiny record label in rural Scotland, the intersection between music and storytelling has provided an opportunity. 'Soundtracks for books on tapes – that's what we do. That's it really. There's no grand scheme or marketing ploy. It does what it says on the tin.' That's Stuart McLean, the founder of Bibliotapes, a project which commissions composers to write new scores to classic novels. Each soundtrack is released on cassette, packaged in the style of a 1960s Pelican paperback. Despite having no website, glossy PR campaign or highly curated Instagram account, the label now has a cult following, with every limited run of cassettes selling out within just a few days.

It's not surprising, seeing as we've enjoyed film scores for the best part of a century. You'd









be hard pressed to find a child who couldn't sing you the theme to *Harry Potter* or hadn't dreamt of battling with lightsabers to the sound of John Williams's *Imperial March*. After all, many of the most famous scores were written for film adaptations of novels. The success of Stanley Kubrick's film adaptation of the Steven King novel *The Shining* was matched by the popularity of its music. Wendy Carlos's haunting score was reissued this year on vinyl for the first time in over 40 years, reaching a new generation of fans.

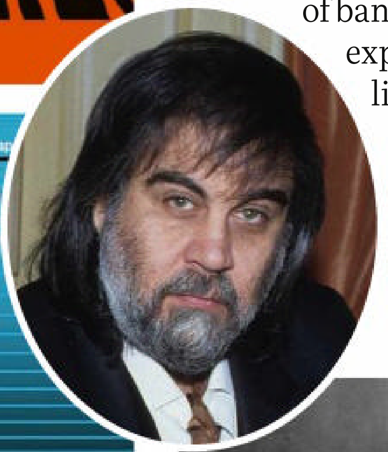
McLean's investment in Bibliotapes is on a slightly smaller scale. 'I used to sell them in runs of 50 tapes, but it started to get a bit popular, so I pushed it to 75,' he says. 'I do everything myself from home. I buy the blank tapes and cases from Merseyside and then send them to the printers in Newton Stewart. They'd never printed a cassette tape before I came along.'

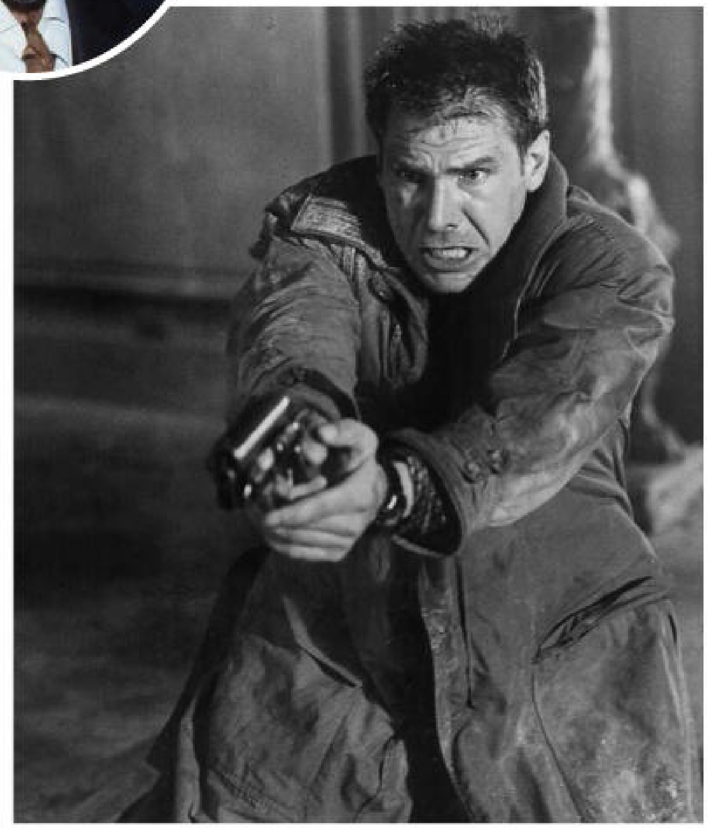
Reworking classics: (left) Bibliotapes titles with their Pelican Books-style covers; (below) Vangelis, whose score for *Blade Runner* created a dystopian world's ambience

Since its launch in 2019, the label has produced soundtracks for books including Kurt Vonnegut's *Cat's Cradle*, Frank Herbert's *Dune*, CS Lewis's *The Magician's Nephew* and Anthony Burgess's *A Clockwork Orange*. Many of these novels also have highly successful film scores to their name, but these played no part in the composers' processes. 'I was very conscious of the *Nineteen Eighty-Four* film and the fact that artists like David Bowie had also been influenced by the novel,' says Neil Stringfellow, composer of the Bibliotapes soundtrack to the George Orwell novel. 'I didn't want to hear any other sounds associated with it. I had to steer away from those other representations to create my own.'

For Eoin Mac Ionmhain, composer of Bibliotapes's *I Am Legend*, there were not one but three existing film soundtracks to compete with. 'I purposely didn't watch them,' he says. 'Instead, I looked at key episodes within the book and came up with different approaches for individual parts of the narrative.' He admits to having turned to other musical styles and practices for inspiration. 'I love Vangelis's score for *Blade Runner*, but I wanted to have folk horror elements, like the soundtrack to *The Wicker Man*. I was also influenced by the weirder side of bands like Led Zeppelin and more experimental 20th-century styles like *musique concrète*.'

Dystopian fantasy worlds seem to be popular with the Bibliotapes composers, but Stringfellow admits there are issues with this. 'It's difficult





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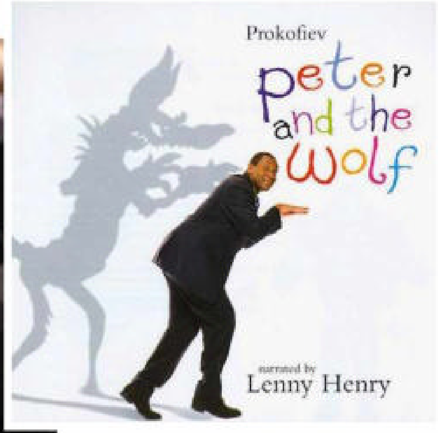


A perennial precedent: *Peter and the Wolf*, as performed live by actress Viola Davis and the LA Philharmonic (left), and on disc with Lenny Henry

to create a dystopian score because we've already got an idea of what it sounds like in culture, thanks to films like *Blade Runner* and *Mad Max*.' Rather than creating a literal interpretation of a dystopian world, his creative process began with a page-by-page analysis of the text. 'It's amazing how many references to sound and music you'll find in a book once you start looking,' he says. In his score, he brought together conventional instruments and household objects, with strings

> 'Younger listeners have multidimensional media habits and expect a soundtrack'

playing against the sounds of doors banging or the clock striking thirteen. Some novels are more easily soundtracked than others. Stringfellow initially tried to write a score to accompany WG Sebald's novel *The Rings of Saturn*, which follows an unnamed narrator on a walking tour of Suffolk. 'The narrator goes on so many tangents in the novel that it made it hard to create a clear line in the music,' he says.

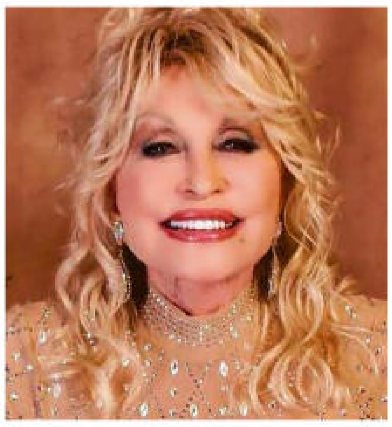
Regardless of the perceived popularity of a novel, many of Bibliotapes's customers are coming to the texts for the first time. 'People often listen to the cassettes without having ever come across the book and will subsequently go on to read it, joining the dots together based on what they've heard,' says McLean.

Others will listen as they read to create an immersive atmosphere. This way of consuming book soundtracks might be more of a natural step for lovers of audiobooks, a form that has been transformed in recent years and now also places a sharper focus on music and sound effects. One company that has tapped into this growing trend is Booktrack. Having started life as a mastering and mixing service, the production company has added a soundtracking element to its offerings, providing full-length musical accompaniment for audiobooks of novels by James Patterson, Nicholas Sparks and even a 28-hour autobiography by Nelson Mandela. 'Storytelling and soundtracking have a long history together,' says Mark Cameron, Booktrack's co-founder. 'Think of the success of Prokofiev's *Peter and the Wolf*.'

His company takes a very different approach to Bibliotapes, with the score providing a backdrop for the narrative rather than acting as a standalone product. Plus, the work is being carried out by engineers rather than composers. 'We initially commissioned new scores and even worked with the New Zealand Symphony Orchestra, but it just wasn't practical or economical,' he says. 'We've now paid for a licence for about 10,000 audio cues, which include sound effects and ambient sounds.'

With an intricate tagging system, engineers work through the novel, syncing up pieces of relevant audio, which are matched based on mood, context and era. Ambient sounds and stock music are phased in and out behind the narration. It might sound less romantic than the Bibliotapes model, but this is an affordable, viable option if you're after something more longform.

With Amazon's introduction of 3D spatial audio in its podcast and audiobook offerings, listeners are expecting more from their stories. 'Younger listeners have almost come to expect a soundtrack,' says Cameron. 'They have multidimensional media habits.' Whether it's offered to the listener as an ambient backdrop to an audiobook or as a standalone soundtrack, delivered to your door on a limited-edition cassette, music is transforming the experience of reading novels. Just as we all know John Williams's two-note motif for *Jaws*, perhaps one day we'll all sing along to the theme tunes for *Wuthering Heights* and *To Kill a Mockingbird*.



Dolly mixture

'I've combined my love of storytelling and books,' Dolly Parton recently tweeted to her fans' delight. The country legend's debut novel, *Run, Rose, Run*, is set to be released in March, alongside a companion album of new music. Having written the book in collaboration with author James Patterson, Parton then got to work on a set of 12 songs based on characters and situations within the novel. It might be Parton's first foray into fiction, but she isn't straying too far from familiar territory. *Run, Rose, Run* follows a young woman who moves to Nashville to follow her dreams of becoming a star.

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Brno Czech Republic

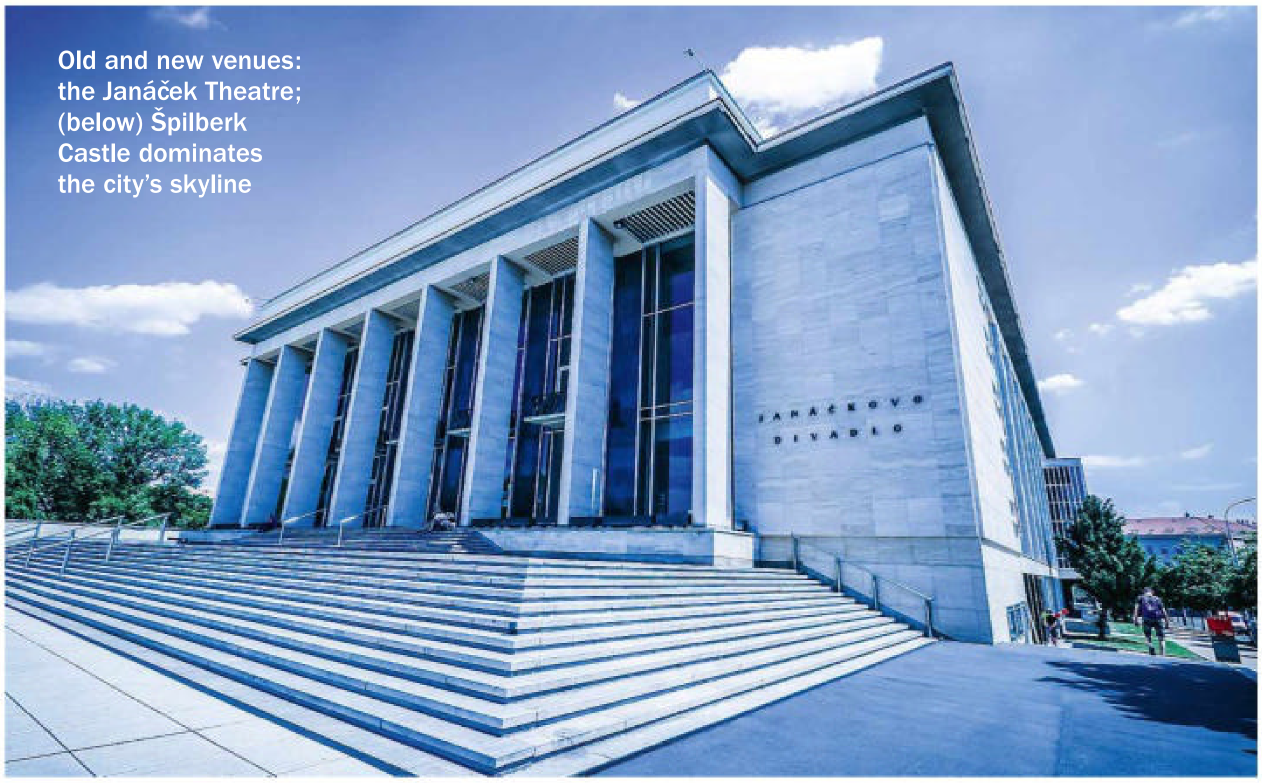
Already a major draw for lovers of Czech music, Janáček's home city is soon to witness an exciting new development, as ***Oliver Condy*** reveals

Broadening horizons: the Brno Philharmonic at Besední dům with principal conductor Dennis Russell Davies (left)

On the outskirts of Brno, in the South Moravian region of the Czech Republic, you'll find the city's most eye-catching building. The Functionalist 'Hall A', part of the Brno Exhibition Centre, spectacularly marries design and purpose, its parabolic arches looming over a colossal interior. Usually bustling with trade shows, today, mid-pandemic, it stands empty.

Or not quite empty, in fact. Tucked away in a corner of one of its transepts is a clue to Brno's musical future. Sealed within a wooden structure the size of a shipping container is a scale-model of the city's new state-of-the-art concert hall. To test its acoustics, every part of the hall has been recreated in miniature, including its wood cladding and all 1,250 audience members. The Brno Philharmonic is taking no chances in its pursuit of sonic excellence.

The hall has been decades in the planning, and is badly needed. Brno's current venue, the grand neo-Renaissance Besední dům, was never supposed to be dedicated solely to music. Its myriad rooms were originally used for art exhibitions, meetings, craft fairs and even a bank, and the central ornate concert hall was really just another room, albeit the biggest. It was designed by Theophil Hansen, who went



Old and new venues: the Janáček Theatre; (below) Špilberk Castle dominates the city's skyline

on to build Vienna's Musikverein, and it is not hard to notice the similarities, down to the topless female statues that form internal supporting columns around the upper floor.

It is, though, just a mini version, and seats just 400, so it's impossible, without extending the stage and reducing the audience by almost a half, even to perform Czech music's most famous work, Dvořák's *New World* Symphony. Composer Leoš Janáček campaigned throughout his life for a new venue, but Brno had other fish to fry. In 1965, four decades after his death, the city opted instead for a new opera house – the modernist Janáček Theatre.

Founded by Janáček in the 1870s (as the Czech Symphony Orchestra), in recent years the Brno Philharmonic has emerged as a leading force on the European orchestral scene. In 2018, it welcomed the American Dennis Russell Davies as its new principal conductor, and in a short space of time he has broadened its repertoire and raised its profile. This season includes a new commission from Czech composer Michal Nejtek and bold programmes including the marriage of Elgar's lesser-known cantata *The Black Knight* with Schnittke's equally unsung *Faust Cantata*. Last year the orchestra launched its own 'Filharmonie Brno' record label, with Dvořák's Symphony No. 1 (kicking off a new cycle) and fellow Czech composer Reicha's rarely heard opera *Lenore* among its first releases.

No doubt music by Janáček will follow, and it's impossible to visit Brno without frequent encounters with the ghost of the city's most famous musical son. Reminders of the composer's significant contributions to Brno's musical life include the Mahen Theatre – where a number of his operas were premiered, including *The Cunning Little Vixen*, *The Makropulos Affair* and *Kát'a Kabanová* – and the organ school that he founded in 1906. Next door is the house that the school's founder built for Janáček, where the composer spent the last 18 years of his life. Today, it's a modest but atmospheric museum, the drawing room dominated by a magnificent grand piano (which you're allowed to play).

You can't visit Brno without encounters with the city's most famous musical son

Local hero

Pavel Haas

Mozart visited Brno, Korngold was born there. But one of the Czech city's most heroic musical figures is Pavel Haas (pictured above), a highly original composer whose music defies categorisation. Embedded in the pavement outside hundreds of residences in Brno are brass plaques ('stolpersteine' or 'stumbling blocks') bearing the names of the mostly Jewish people who lived there before being transported to Nazi concentration camps. You can find Haas's at Smetanova 630/28, detailing his birthdate, the year he was deported to Terezín, the Jewish ghetto 30 miles from Prague, and his death.

Brno is itself a beautiful city with much to explore – its superb tram system makes doing so a breeze. You may stroll around the centre and enjoy the café culture, visit its impressive churches or perhaps wander up to the medieval Špilberk Castle that overlooks the city (its stunning inner courtyard hosted the Brno Philharmonic playing Janáček's *Taras Bulba* last summer). Twenty minutes' walk to the north is the Villa Tugendhat, a prototype modernist home built in 1929/30 with a vast glass front, open-plan living and functional interior design. To those who first saw it at its completion, Villa Tugendhat's form and aesthetics were both familiar and yet somehow utterly alien – rather like the music of Janáček.

Further info: Brno Philharmonic: filharmonie-brno.cz/en; Janáček at Brno: leosjanacek.eu/en

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Composer of the Week is broadcast on Radio 3 at 12pm, Monday to Friday. Programmes in January are:
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24-28 January Marianna Martines
31 January – 4 February Elgar

Erwin Schulhoff

Suppressed by the Nazis, the jazz-loving Jewish composer's originality and brilliant wit deserve to find a new audience, says *Simon Broughton*

ILLUSTRATION: MATT HERRING

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Schulhoff's style

Jazz: One of the first European composers to be influenced by jazz, Schulhoff used dance forms like ragtime, tango, shimmy and foxtrot in piano pieces including *Fünf Pittoresken*, Partita für Klavier and *5 Études de Jazz*. Jazz also features in his Suite for Chamber Orchestra, the Concerto for Piano and Small Orchestra, and Second Symphony.

Dada: Schulhoff's friend, the painter George Grosz, was part of the post-WWI movement to reject the bourgeois art of the past (see Kurt Schwitters' Dada poster, above). 'The divine spark may be present in a liver sausage or a contrabassoon,' Schulhoff wrote in the preface to his *Bass Nightingale* (1922).

Neo-classicism: Like Stravinsky and Martinů, Schulhoff adopted a neo-baroque style for tuneful yet spiky and dissonant pieces like his Bach-inspired Concerto for String Quartet, Double Concerto for Flute and Piano and Second Symphony.

Flamboyance: Schulhoff wrote chamber pieces for eccentric combinations (Concertino for flute/piccolo, viola and double bass), the jazzy *Hot Sonata* for saxophone and piano, and the *Sonata Erotica*.

Erwin Schulhoff, born in Prague in 1894, was a close contemporary of Martinů, a fellow Czech, and Milhaud and Poulenc in France. They were all working at the same time and wrote a considerable amount of music of similar quality. So why are these other names fairly well known, while Schulhoff isn't? The sad truth is that he was silenced, dying in a Nazi prison camp in 1942, and subsequently unjustly forgotten by musical history. It was a similar story for his fellow Jewish Czech composers Viktor Ullmann, Hans Krása, Pavel Haas and Gideon Klein, who were in the Terezín (Theresienstadt) ghetto where at least there was the opportunity to be musically creative before they were transported to Auschwitz and killed.

Schulhoff was an energetic *enfant terrible* in the first decades of the 20th century, fascinated by jazz and writing music in an original if not consistent style. His works include six completed symphonies (plus one in piano score and another unfinished), a Don Juan opera called *Flammen* (Flames), a lot of piano and chamber music, and several very inventive concertos – some for unusual combinations like a Double Concerto for Flute, Piano and Orchestra and a Concerto for String Quartet and Wind Orchestra. There's also the *Hot Sonata* for alto saxophone and piano, and the *Sonata Erotica* for female voice in which the singer performs an orgasm – 70 years before Meg Ryan in *When Harry Met Sally*. 'This is a full-blooded musician, blessed with wit, who meets the most sophisticated expectations,' wrote Erich Steinhard, the editor of *Der Auftakt*, a Prague music journal in 1926.

> 'Schulhoff is a full-blooded musician who meets the most sophisticated expectations'

At the time of Schulhoff's birth, Prague was a major cultural centre in the Habsburg Empire, described by Max Brod, Kafka's biographer and Janáček's translator, whom Schulhoff knew, as '100 per cent Czech, 100 per cent German and 100 per cent Jewish'. This could equally be a description of Schulhoff himself. He was born into a prosperous Jewish merchant family who, with encouragement from Dvořák no less, arranged a comprehensive musical education starting at the Prague Conservatoire when he was ten. He went on to Vienna, Leipzig and Cologne and became a very accomplished pianist, for which he won the Mendelssohn Prize in 1913. He wrote piano music and completed a Piano Concerto at this time.

In 1914, Europe went to war and Schulhoff served on the Russian and Italian fronts. 'It is nothing less than a flood, a destructive force threatening to destroy the entire culture of European humanity,' he wrote in his diary in 1916. 'I can only place the years 1914, 1915, 1916 on humanity's lowest rank; they make a mockery of the 20th century.'

The First World War brought a decisive change in Schulhoff's outlook and music. He moved to Dresden, living with his sister Viola, an artist, and got to know other artists such as Otto Dix and George Grosz, who vividly depicted decrepit war wounded, low-life bars and jazz bands

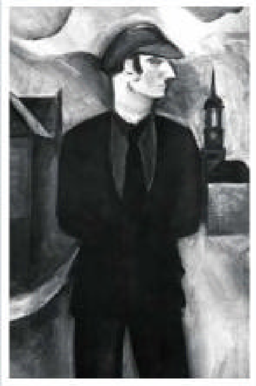
Jude
HALT!
STÓJ!
Jazz

SCHULHOFF Life&Times

1894

LIFE: Erwin Schulhoff is born into a German-Jewish family in Prague. As a child, his musical studies are encouraged by ***Antonín Dvořák*** and he joins the Prague Conservatory aged ten.

TIMES: Alfred Dreyfus, a Jewish officer in the French army, is falsely convicted of treason and sentenced to life imprisonment for allegedly communicating military secrets to the German Embassy in Paris.



1919

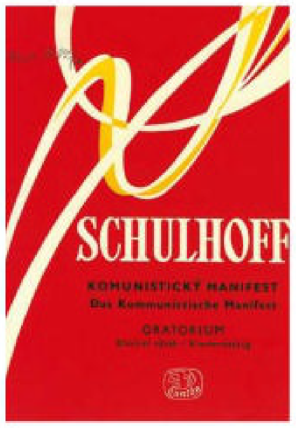
LIFE: After serving and suffering injury in World War I, he moves to Dresden and joins the Sezession Gruppe 1919, a group of artists centred around ***Otto Griebel*** (self-portrait above), and founds a series of progressive concerts.

TIMES: Rosa Luxemburg, the revolutionary socialist and co-founder of *The Red Flag* newspaper, is executed by German government soldiers in the aftermath of January's failed Spartacist uprising.

1928

LIFE: Well established at home and abroad as a composer and pianist, he makes his first phonograph records for Polydor, performing a selection from his jazz-influenced piano works.

TIMES: Kurt Weill and Bertolt Brecht's ***The Threepenny Opera***, featuring 'Mack the Knife' and 'Pirate Jenny', opens to a mixed reception at Berlin's Theater am Schiffbauerdamm.



1932

LIFE: A member of the Czech Left Front group of intellectuals, he composes his Marx- and Lenin-quoting ***Communist Manifesto***, a cantata for voices and wind ensemble.

TIMES: Otto Wacker, a German art dealer, is sentenced to 19 months in prison and fined 30,000 Reichmarks for commissioning and selling forgeries of paintings by Vincent van Gogh.

1938

LIFE: Two days after the death of his mother, he marries Mimi, a piano student with whom he had an affair that has led to a prolonged and difficult divorce from his first wife, Alice.

TIMES: Germany, Italy, France and Great Britain sign the Munich Pact, ceding the Sudetenland region of Czechoslovakia, which contains much of the country's mineral wealth, to Germany.

1942

LIFE: Deported by the Nazis to the Wulzbürg prison near Weissenburg in Bavaria, he dies there of tuberculosis on 18 August, aged 48.

TIMES: In Prague ***Reinhard Heydrich***, the brutal Nazi governor of Bohemia and Moravia, is fatally wounded in an ambush by Jozef Gabčík and Jan Kubiš.

Artistic legacy: (right) Schulhoff's friend, the artist George Grosz, in his studio; (far right) the Erwin Schulhoff memorial in the courtyard of the fortress of Wülzburg, Weissenburg in Bavaria

in a style they called 'Neue Sachlichkeit' (New Objectivity). Their pictures are the defining images of the Weimar Republic.

George Grosz in his autobiography describes his first encounter with jazz in Berlin and a band leader pretending to be out of control, hurling drinks and instruments around. 'What I had just seen was a parody of what would one day be a reality,' he wrote; 'one in which another mad band-leader would conduct a dance of death, snatching instruments from his musicians' hands and belabouring their heads until they collapsed, to ovations that would far surpass the applause lavished upon his harmless predecessor.'

Schulhoff seized upon jazz as a way of cutting himself off from a conventional past devalued by the horrors of WWI. His first jazz-inspired pieces, *Fünf Pittoresken*, were written in 1919 and dedicated to Grosz. With titles like 'Foxtrot' and 'Ragtime', they have a kinship with Stravinsky's rag-inspired pieces of this same period. More substantial is his six-movement Suite for Chamber Orchestra of 1921. Originally called *Suite in the New Style*, its movements have titles like 'Ragtime', 'Tango', 'Shimmy' and 'Jazz', and the percussion section includes football rattle, xylophone, swanee-whistle and car horn. In a letter to composer Alban Berg about the piece he says: 'There are times when I dance night after night with the girls in the bars, purely for the rhythmic enjoyment of it and the sensual undercurrents; this is a phenomenal spur to my creativity, since my personality is very earthy, almost bestial!'

Since 1920, Schulhoff had been teaching piano in Saarbrücken, a city he hated for its petit-bourgeois mentality. In 1921, he married and, early the following year, moved to Berlin where his son Peter was born. He returned to Prague in 1923. The Czech capital was culturally divided, with a Czech and a German opera house and most Jews leaning towards German culture. Schulhoff, at home with both, declared: 'I would like to be a cultural intermediary here in Prague between the Czechs and the Germans.' This included jazz-inspired music for a production of Molière's *Le Bourgeois Gentilhomme* at the Czech National Theatre.

This next decade, until Hitler came to power in Germany in 1933, was the

GETTY, ALAMY

most prolific and successful period for Schulhoff. Alongside his enthusiasm for jazz, he also adopted a neo-classical style in his concertante works and Second Symphony. He wrote a lot of chamber music, including a Solo Violin Sonata (1927), a superb Duo for Violin and Cello dedicated to Janáček (1924), *Five Pieces for String Quartet* featuring dance rhythms (1923) and a powerful Sextet (1924). The American music critic Olin Downes heard the *Five Pieces* in Salzburg and wrote: 'A young composer of talent disported himself in these pieces, and his audience was duly grateful. Not all composers, old or young, have the good sense not to take themselves, now and again, too seriously.' After the concert, Downes said the composer played American ragtime in a local bar 'till the walls tottered'.

Schulhoff completed his Symphony No. 1 in 1925. It's an original three-movement work with folk influences (which also feature in some of the chamber music above), and lots of percussion, including flexatone. It was premiered in Berlin under Erich Kleiber in a concert including Bartók's First Piano Concerto played by the composer (whose later *Music for Strings, Percussion and Celesta* includes echoes from Schulhoff's symphony). It's a measure of Schulhoff's status at that time that his music was performed alongside Bartók. His First Symphony was also conducted in Prague, London and Cincinnati by George Szell, Ernest Ansermet and Erich Kleiber, plus across Europe by the likes of Václav Talich and Pierre Monteux.

In 1925, Schulhoff re-worked his Suite into a dance-pantomime called *Moonstruck* (*Náměsičná* in Czech, *Die Mondsüchtige* in German), which, after failed attempts to stage it in Prague and Paris, was premiered in Oxford in 1931

Václav Talich and Pierre Monteux conducted Schulhoff's work across Europe

with Schulhoff conducting. Symphony No. 2, written for a radio broadcast in 1932, is probably his most accessible in that genre: its neo-classical style incorporates a 'Scherzo alla Jazz', including banjo and saxophone (one of the first symphonies to include that instrument). It was the last of his six completed symphonies to be performed in his lifetime.

From 1930, with the rise of the Nazis, Schulhoff became more and more attracted to communism. He set texts by Marx and Lenin in his *Communist Manifesto* of 1932, and his subsequent symphonies became simpler if never actually social realist in their style. The Fifth is weighty yet personal, suggesting the fear of someone trapped by circumstance, which he clearly was.

Schulhoff applied for Soviet citizenship after the Munich agreement of 1938 (see *Life & Times*, left). His music was declared 'degenerate' by the Nazis – for its modernism, its jazziness and because he was Jewish. After the Nazi invasion of Czechoslovakia he worked as an arranger at Prague Radio under a pseudonym, but his Soviet citizenship came through just weeks before Hitler invaded the Soviet Union on 22 June 1941, and the following day Schulhoff was arrested as a citizen of an 'enemy power'. He was sent to the Wülzburg Fortress in Bavaria, converted into a prison camp for Jews who were citizens of other states, and died there of tuberculosis on 28 August 1942, aged 48.

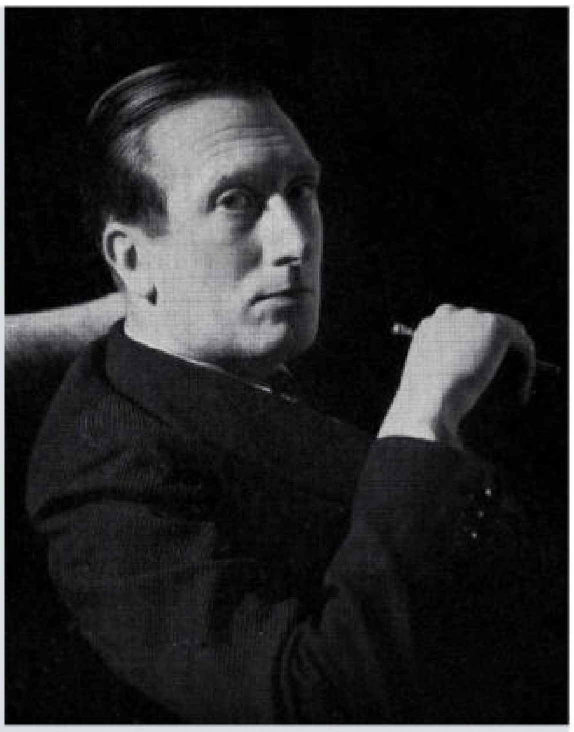
Though edging back into the repertoire, Schulhoff's music still isn't played as much as it deserves to be. Audiences will love, in particular, the *Hot Sonata* for Alto Saxophone and Piano, the Dadaist jazzy Concerto for Piano and Small Orchestra and the Suite for Chamber Orchestra on the one side and the deeper Sextet, String Quartets and Symphonies on the other. Now, 80 years after his death, it's time for performers and listeners to explore.

Schulhoff is featured in the BBC Symphony Orchestra and BBC Singers' 'Total Immersion' day at the Barbican, 23 January

William Walton

Viola Concerto

With this unexpected, subtle masterpiece, Walton established himself as a major composing talent; ***Julian Haylock*** finds the best recordings



The composer

William Walton was 27 when he enjoyed his big breakthrough with the premiere of his Viola Concerto in 1929. Not that he had been entirely unknown before then. In 1923, the first public performance of his *Façade* for narrator and ensemble, written with the poet Edith Sitwell, received a lot of attention from the press, though largely not of the complimentary kind. Sitwell was not just Walton's collaborator but also his co-landlady, as from 1920 the young composer had been living in a garret in the Chelsea house owned by her and her two brothers, Osbert and Sacheverell.

Building a Library is broadcast on Radio 3 at 9.30am each Saturday as part of *Record Review*. A highlights podcast is available on BBC Sounds.

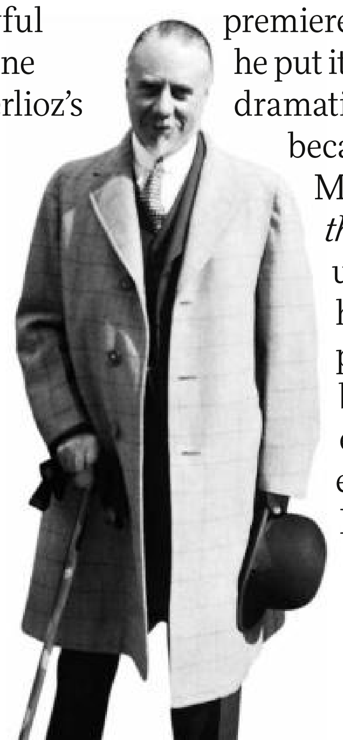
The work

Walton's Viola Concerto established at a stroke his unique creative voice. For several years he had tried distilling the dazzling stylistic range of his *Façade* (1921) into a convincing long-range structure. There are hints of what was to come in the *Portsmouth Point* overture and orchestral *Siesta*, as well as 1927's Sinfonia Concertante for piano and orchestra. Yet, as *The Times* remarked as part of a generally enthusiastic review of the latter, 'Mr. Walton has not yet fully found his individuality'.

In 1928, on a winter holiday in Amalfi, Italy, Walton began making provisional sketches for the Viola Concerto, but his heart wasn't really in it. It was the conductor Thomas Beecham who had first suggested he write a concerto for British viola supremo, Lionel Tertis – although Walton was at a loss to see why. At the time, Walton could barely stand the instrument, which he thought made 'an awful sound', and could recall only one decent piece of viola music, Berlioz's *Harold in Italy*.

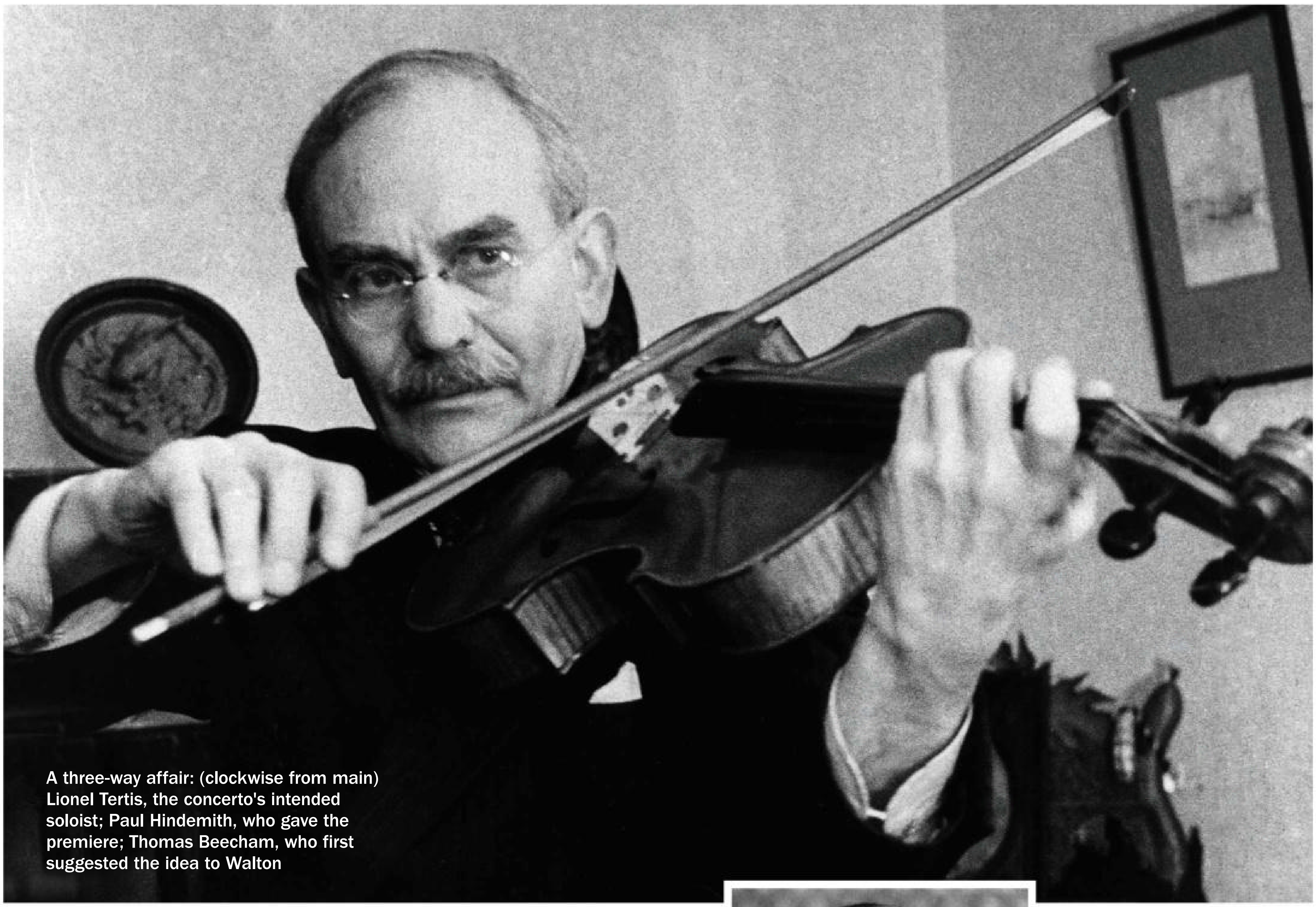
Yet Beecham had clearly spotted something conducive in Walton's emerging style to the viola's soulful musical voice – the sense of a lone introspective pitted against the combined might of a modern symphony orchestra. As the 26-year-old Walton warmed to his task, he discovered this was indeed the perfect vehicle for uniting the seemingly disparate elements in his musical personality. The nostalgic longing at the heart of his creative universe became fused with a rhythmic pizzazz, harmonic pungency and melodic vitality that would become indelible trademarks of his later work. Not only that, but he fully immersed himself in the viola's elusive soundworld, combining its natural flair for bittersweet *cantabile* eloquence with a previously unsuspected penchant for pyrotechnics.

Beecham spotted in Walton's emerging style an affinity with the viola's soulful musical voice



Convinced he had a masterwork on his hands, Walton duly sent the completed manuscript to Tertis for his approval. However, in their enthusiasm, both Beecham and Walton had overlooked Tertis's conservative nature. Declaring the work 'too modern', Tertis flatly refused to play it. It was only after attending the premiere, with 'shame and contrition' (as he put it in his autobiography), that he dramatically revised his opinion and became an enthusiastic advocate.

Mind you, according to *Behind the Façade*, Susanna Walton's unputdownable biography of her late husband, one particular performance of the concerto given by Tertis in Worcester fell on an especially famous pair of 'deaf' ears. Walton happened upon Edward Elgar – never a fan of the



A three-way affair: (clockwise from main) Lionel Tertis, the concerto's intended soloist; Paul Hindemith, who gave the premiere; Thomas Beecham, who first suggested the idea to Walton

GETTY

younger composer's music at the best of times – in the gents' cloakrooms. Elgar muttered that Walton had 'murdered the poor unfortunate instrument', and seemed much more interested in catching the latest racing results.

Walton was so hurt by Tertis's rejection that he considered briefly recasting the work for the violin, but at this point fate intervened in a quite unexpected way. Whether it was by Tertis (according to his memoirs) or Edward Clark of the BBC Music Department (according to Walton's recollections in the *Sunday Telegraph* in 1962), an alternative viola soloist was suggested, guaranteed to generate huge interest: leading German composer Paul Hindemith, then in his mid-30s and with around 50 published works to his name. Hindemith had started out as violinist and then switched to viola following the First World War, as a founding member of the Amar Quartet.

Hindemith willingly agreed to give the premiere, although that wasn't quite the end of the matter. Hindemith's London publishers felt that the then famous Courtauld-Sargent series of concerts was a more fitting setting for Hindemith's UK concerto debut than the 'worthy' but 'so-so playing' they thought typified the Promenade Concerts. Nevertheless, Hindemith went ahead with the planned Proms premiere at the Queen's Hall on 3 October 1929. However, Walton quickly regretted having offered to conduct, as there turned out to be innumerable tiny errors in the orchestral parts, which he then had to stay up all night correcting, just in time for the concert. Hindemith, although deeply committed to the project and technically highly proficient, turned out to be somewhat unyielding. Accordingly to Walton, 'he just stood up and played'.

Yet despite any behind-the-scenes problems, the premiere was extremely well received, and as a result Walton became the toast of the rising generation of British composers. And little wonder. He achieves near-miracles by making the viola's relative lack of sonic penetration of positive benefit, interweaving and dovetailing it with the orchestra – especially in the central *scherzo* – with a Mendelssohn-like deftness of touch. This is enhanced still further by Walton's 1961 reorchestration, which highlights the concerto's quicksilver textures, jazz-fuelled rhythmic asides and bluesy nostalgia. All three movements embrace music that is somehow virtuosic, yet not showy; bold and exuberant in places, yet profoundly intimate, and tinged with an autumnal reflectiveness.

Turn the page to discover the recommended recordings of Walton's Viola Concerto

Tonal sophistication: Lawrence Power reveals Walton's subtle expressiveness

The best recording

The original and best with Power

Lawrence Power *(viola)*

BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra/Ilan Volkov
Hyperion CDA 67587

The 30-odd available recordings of Walton's Viola Concerto generally fall into one of two main camps: those who tend towards a more rounded, soulful, alto cello sonority, and those more inclined towards a leaner, brighter, violinistic quality. However, one player stands out as combining the best of all worlds: Lawrence Power. Technically, Power appears almost impervious to Walton's not inconsiderable technical demands, delighting in those tricky sleight-of-hand manoeuvres that others find a shade taxing. Yet he also captures Walton's *cantabile espressivo* with complete assuredness, tantalising the senses with a soaring intensity that time and again scores an emotional bullseye without ever becoming sentimental.

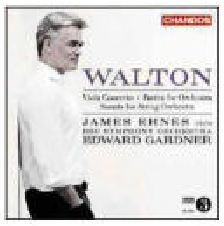
Most importantly, Power possesses the ideal soundworld to convey Walton's iridescent emotional complexities. This is music that tantalises by gently veiling its expressive core behind a smoky veneer of semantic elusiveness, and more than any other player, Power matches this half-spoken quality with a tonal sophistication that in the central *scherzo* impishly skirts around generic norms. One of the most compelling (and counter-intuitive) aspects of Walton's music is that the more unmistakably direct in expression it becomes, the less convincing and personal it feels, and Power captures this emotional ambiguity both gesturally and tonally.

Power captures Walton's emotional ambiguity both gesturally and tonally

Walton's 1961 revision reduces the woodwind from triple to double, the trumpets from three to two, removes the tuba altogether and adds a harp. It is this version that has invariably been played and recorded ever since. Tellingly, Power elected to return to Walton's original scoring of 1928/9, and the result is a darker, moodier, more uncompromising soundscape that is brought compellingly to life by the BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra under its then (September

Three other great recordings

William Primrose (viola)
Despite an occasional slight untidiness along the way, William Primrose's July 1946 recording, with Walton conducting the Philharmonia, remains a must-hear for its no-nonsense emotional clarity. Primrose's unmistakably violinistic, rapier-like thrust (shades of Jascha Heifetz in the Violin Concerto) generates the greatest excitement, surfing the fulsome textures of the original scoring with a charismatic intensity that few other players can match. Primrose virtually defined for two decades how this work should sound. *(Naxos 8.110316)*



James Ehnes (viola)
Finest of all the violin virtuosos who stray occasionally into viola territory is James Ehnes. Those listeners who incline naturally towards the viola's plangent chestiness may feel slightly short-changed here, yet Ehnes produces a uniquely smooth, immaculately focused sound throughout the range, his intonation is spotless, and he seamlessly negotiates the score's many intricacies. Edward Gardner and the BBC Symphony Orchestra respond with alacrity, complementing Ehnes's eloquent advocacy with playing

of radiant distinction, captured in gloriously immersive, impactful sound. *(Chandos CHSA 5210)*

David Aaron Carpenter (viola)
When originally reviewing David Aaron Carpenter's beguiling account of the Walton Concerto, supported to the hilt by Vladimir Jurowski and the London Philharmonic, I was struck by the purity of his upper register, which soars aloft without the slightest hint of strain. When the notes start flying, absolute tonal focus is challenging to maintain, particularly in the viola's lower register, yet Carpenter retains clarity at all dynamic levels. He also captures a sense of emotional despondency in the concerto's slow epilogue that is deeply moving. *(Warner Classics 90295 68769)*

And one to avoid...

Musically speaking, Yehudi Menuhin is as compelling as ever in this 1969 recording. His characteristic timbre, enhanced by his close sense of identification with Walton's nostalgic soundscapes, is truly memorable. With the composer conducting and the New Philharmonia on fine form, this should have been a sure-fire winner. Yet the technical frailties that beset Menuhin's bowing arm during the latter part of his playing career are an undeniable distraction.

2006) chief conductor, Ilan Volkov. Matching Power's inspirational playing, the orchestra captures the ebb and flow of Walton's music with suppleness of line and enticing spontaneity, generating an atmosphere of barely restrained brooding power, captured in immaculately balanced, glowing sound by production team Andrew Keener and Simon Eadon.

The concerto was inscribed 'To Christabel' (Christabel McLaren, Lady Aberconway), with whom Walton was unrequitedly infatuated at the time. No other performance captures the work's spirit of modified rapture so keenly.

GETTY, JACK LIEBECK, MARCO BORGGREVE

Stress and strain: Jörg Widmann's Concerto is angry and edgy; (below) Edmund Rubbra

Continue the journey...

We suggest five works to explore after Walton's Viola Concerto

Though Walton was no great fan of **Hindemith**'s playing, it seems appropriate to turn to the German composer's *Trauermusik*, composed in 1936: not only did Hindemith again premiere the work himself, but also he wrote it while in London in direct response to the news of the death of King George V. Like the Walton, the work makes use of exquisite major-minor harmonic clashes, has its rhythmically vigorous moments, and the viola soloist is given plangently expressive music to play. (**Tabea Zimmermann (viola); Deutsches Symphonie-Orchester Berlin/Hans Graf** *Myrios MYR010*).

> Holst's *Lyric Movement* is one of his most poetically atmospheric works

The viola's qualities of lyricism and brooding pensiveness were effectively taken up by **Holst** in his *Lyric Movement* (1933), composed near the end of his life. Understated, rarely raising itself to a *forte*, it is yet quietly passionate and one of Holst's most poetically atmospheric works. (**Andriy Viytovych (viola); English Sinfonia/Howard Griffiths** *Naxos 8.570339*).

Britten, himself a viola player, originally composed his *Lachrymae* for viola and piano in 1950; in 1976, very shortly before his death, he orchestrated the piano part for string orchestra – though the result, being Britten, is not 'black and white' but a rich tapestry of colours. Often furtive and mysterious, the work's basis in a song by Dowland, 'If my complaints could passions move', only becomes clear at its very end. (**Máte Szücs (viola); Aldeburgh Strings/Markus Däunert** *Linn CKD 478*).

Closer to the Walton in spirit is ***Rubbra***'s Viola Concerto (1952) – perhaps because it, too, was written in the shadow of the composer's troubled love life (his second marriage was near breakdown), though the work is noble and bitter-sweet rather than anguished. (**Lawrence Power; BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra/Ilan Volkov** *Hyperion CDA 67587*).

Jörg Widmann's more radical take on the Viola Concerto (2015) was written for the French player Antoine Tamestit. As Tamestit has observed, Widmann is 'haunted by Schumann, Brahms, Beethoven and Mozart', as is evident in the anguished yet beautiful lyricism of the fifth and final movement, closer in spirit to the Walton than the preceding movements which are generally edgy and angry. (**Antoine Tamestit (viola); Bavarian Radio Symphony Orchestra/Daniel Harding** *Harmonia Mundi HMM 902268*).

Reviews

110 CDs, Books & DVDs rated by expert critics

Welcome

2021 is behind us and the clean slate of a new year positively tantalises. I'm not really one for resolutions, but if you've over-indulged in your favourite works and composers of late, then perhaps you might commit to branching out a little. This issue we're awash with music to discover, from shiny new opera to lesser-known pieces by familiar names. Orchestral works by Florence Price and Sofia Gubaidulina meet piano works by Hélène de Montgeroult, not to mention chamber gems by British stalwarts Bax and Bantock. There's also a disc of Mozart-inspired trumpet concertos, a dazzling Britten opera and notable appearances by the late Bernard Haitink, Sheku and Isata Kanneh-Mason and the effervescent Sabine Devielhe.
Happy New Year!
Michael Beek *Reviews editor*

This month's critics

John Allison, Nicholas Anderson, Terry Blain, Kate Bolton-Porciatti, Geoff Brown, Michael Church, Oliver Condy, Christopher Cook, Martin Cotton, Christopher Dingle, Misha Donat, Jessica Duchen, Rebecca Franks, George Hall, Malcolm Hayes, Julian Haylock, Claire Jackson, Daniel Jaffé, Erica Jeal, Berta Joncus, Erik Levi, Natasha Loges, Andrew McGregor, David Nice, Roger Nichols, Bayan Northcott, Steph Power, Anthony Pryer, Paul Riley, Jan Smaczny, Michael Tanner, Sarah Urwin Jones, Kate Wakeling

KEY TO STAR RATINGS

★★★★★	Outstanding
★★★★	Excellent
★★★	Good
★★	Disappointing
★	Poor

RECORDING OF THE MONTH

Small-scale Korngold with heart and soul

The Eusebius Quartet presents a joyful feast of the composer's pre-Hollywood chamber works, says *Jessica Duchen*

Korngold

Piano Quintet in E major, Op. 15*; Viel Lärmen um Nichts (Much Ado About Nothing), Op. 11*; String Quartet No. 2 in E flat major, Op. 26
*Alasdair Beatson (piano), Eusebius Quartet
SOMM Recordings
SOMMCD 0642 68:30 mins

The Eusebius Quartet was formed in 2016 by four young British and American musicians and named after the poetic soul of Robert Schumann's two alter-egos. Complemented by the pianist Alasdair Beatson, they have devoted their debut recording to some of Erich Wolfgang Korngold's most personal and passionate chamber works. It has taken decades for the composer who was praised in his day as the greatest child prodigy composer since Mendelssohn to escape the bizarre stigmas that the mid-20th century attached to him for malodorous reasons all of their own.

These pieces all date from beyond Korngold's child prodigy years, but before the Nazi threat sent him into exile in Hollywood, where Warner Brothers effectively saved his life. The Piano Quintet is from 1921, just after his opera *Die tote Stadt*. This is the work of a ridiculously gifted 24-year-old composer head over heels in love – as shown particularly in the slow movement. It's a set of variations on Korngold's song 'Mond, so geh'st du wieder auf', one of his *Abschiedlieder* (Songs of Farewell) – so-called because his family and that of the young actress he loved, Luzi von Sonnenthal, were endeavouring to part them. The pair were devastated, not yet knowing that they would marry three

Spirit and affection: Eusebius Quartet takes to Korngold with zest and zeal

years later. One distinctive motif, with a downward-plunging seventh, became Korngold's 'Luzi' theme.

The Eusebius Quartet and Beatson bring this heady score all the intensity it deserves, their lavish tone conjuring quasi-orchestral colours, sensitive to every twist of the rubato-laden canvas (and there are many). It is extreme music, its heart unfashionably yet gloriously on its sleeve, and the ensemble performs with real sincerity, wisely adding no affectation. The musicians seem to feel the music just as it is, complex on the surface but direct and straight from the heart. A warm, glowing clarity about the recorded sound is appropriate enhancement.

The suite of four movements from Korngold's incidental music from *Much Ado About Nothing* exists in several different scorings, from full orchestra down to violin and piano, in which guise it has chiefly maintained popularity.

Listening to the Eusebius, it's hard to believe there are only four musicians playing

But in 2012 an unknown string quartet version of three movements in Korngold's writing turned up in an auction. This is its first recording, with assistance from Tom Poster, who made the arrangement of the missing Intermezzo. Again, the Eusebius Quartet takes the music on its own terms, performing it with affection and high spirits in droves.

Finally, the String Quartet No. 2 is the most 'Viennese' of Korngold's three quartets: waltz rhythms, ladled-on portamentos and a glowing, chocolatey embarrassment of riches abounds in its atmospheric pages. Sometimes it's hard, listening to the Eusebius here, to believe that there are only four musicians playing. Not for them the alternately wispy and over-pressed exaggerations that have become trendy of late. Instead, from their full-blooded yet flexible tone to their intelligent handling of the ebb and flow, they offer a joyous feast of Korngold at his finest.

PERFORMANCE ★★★★★
RECORDING ★★★★★

ANNA PATARAKINI

An interview with Hannah Sloane

What was your starting point for this album?
Our first violinist, Beatrice Philips, is the artistic director of the Lewes Chamber Music Festival and she did a whole Second Viennese School festival in 2018. The Korngold Second String Quartet sort of snuck in and we just absolutely loved it. We had never heard anything like it, really, so we recorded it ourselves later that year.

The Piano Quintet makes for a dazzling opener...
The writing is so amazing and the score is full of these long, German instructions like 'Imperceptibly faster but not too much faster, but now rushed'. It was fantastic to work on it with Alasdair Beatson. We had played it with him in 2018, so it was brilliant to revisit it. One thing that was really great about this project was that, because it happened at such a strange time, we had a lot of time to rehearse. We spent a good week exploring the piece in detail.

What can you tell us about the new arrangement you premiere on the album?
We were searching for a piece for the middle and Hannah Shaw, our violist, unearthed this quartet transcription that Korngold made of his Op. 11. We really liked it, but Bea felt that the most glorious bit is the Intermezzo, which wasn't arranged. It was clear to us that we wanted it to be for piano quintet, rather than for quartet. Perhaps it would have been natural to have done a quartet arrangement, because that's what the other three pieces were, but we wanted that luscious sweep.
Hannah Sloane is the Eusebius Quartet's cellist

Orchestral

ORCHESTRAL CHOICE

Fischer's Mahler Six is in the top rank

Dusseldorf's latest cycle instalment really is another winner, says *David Nice*

Mahler

Symphony No. 6
Dusseldorf Symphony Orchestra/
Ádám Fischer
CAvi-music AVI 8553490 80:32 mins

Every aspect of this colossal symphony finds its proper expression in the latest instalment of Ádám Fischer's hugely impressive Dusseldorf Mahler cycle – which is not to say it's in any way a middle-of-the-road performance. The outer movements' march manias and the pounding *Scherzo* (here made the third movement) have plenty of drive, but Fischer knows exactly where to give them space and air. The view from above at the heart of the first movement is discreetly judged, with cowbells never too insistent, while the whole of the *Andante* movement is beautifully paced and lit from within; Fischer doesn't make the mistake of so many conductors who take Mahler's injunction 'don't drag' as 'speed up' at the heartaching climax. And, in the *Scherzo*, this is the most quirky-charming take I know, starting with the solo oboe, on the 'old-fashioned' trios (I'd always prefer the 3/8 response to the opening drama, replaying its conflicts and even the keys of the contrasting subject-matter, to come second as Mahler originally intended, but you can always programme your player to reverse the order given here).

The engineering is superlative: all textural detail, every frequency from shrill piccolo to louring tuba, can be perfectly heard. And the final, *fortissimo* minor triad. a last shock after the third hammer-blow (which Fischer includes), has devastating impact; this was the last chord the orchestra played live before the pandemic (the final concert took place on 2 March 2020). The conductor writes eloquently about it in the booklet; everything he says is borne out in the performance, very much at the top of the list along with the same team's Mahler Three.

> The final *fortissimo* minor triad has devastating impact

PERFORMANCE ★★★★★
RECORDING ★★★★★

Air on a theme: Ádám Fischer gives the music room to breathe

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Bliss

The Lady of Shallott; Contrasts; Rout; March of Homage etc
Ilona Domnich (soprano); BBC Concert Orchestra/Martin Yates
Dutton Epoch CDLX 7387 (CD/SACD) 77:38 mins

The biggest work here is *The Lady of Shalott*, the last and least well-known of Bliss's ballet scores, in its first complete recording (a version conducted by the composer, taken from a 1968 broadcast, is slightly cut). It consists of a sequence of discrete short movements, all expertly written, taking in the mysterious, the pompous, the athletic and the romantic. The colourful scoring, together with some characteristic melodic and harmonic twists, go right back to the *Colour Symphony* of the 1920s. Whether it stands up as a whole without the visual element of the dance is another matter, although it's hard to imagine a more persuasive performance, and the recording is warm and three dimensional.

Paradoxically, the continuous seven-minute span of *Rout* makes a more rounded impression, with the soprano singing nonsense syllables (not always clear from Ilona Domnich) and its echoes of Stravinsky and the fairground. Of the other short pieces, *Polonaise* and *Bliss* are orchestrations of early piano pieces which would work well as accompaniments to a cabaret dance set; and *Answering You* and *Heritage of Britain* are signature tunes to long-forgotten BBC Radio programmes.

Musically more significant are the *Two Contrasts*, arranged from the middle movements of the Second String Quartet, one of Bliss's more astringent scores. The scampering lines of the scherzo present a few problems to the massed orchestral violins, but they keep the energy flowing. And the *March of Homage*, written following the death of Churchill, is a solemn remembrance, dark-hued and deeply felt. *Martin Cotton*

PERFORMANCE ★★★★
RECORDING ★★★★★

Bruckner

Symphony No. 7
Netherlands Radio Philharmonic Orchestra/Bernard Haitink
Challenge Classics CC 72895 68:10 mins

For his last concerts the late Bernard Haitink conducted Bruckner's Seventh Symphony, preceded usually by a concerto, with the Vienna Philharmonic. But for his last concert with the Netherlands Radio Philharmonic Orchestra, the first orchestra he conducted in 1957, he conducted just the the Seventh, a work for which he felt a profound affinity. Anyone who heard his

Proms performance with the VPO will remember its glowing and rich sound. Since that is the VPO's speciality, it's not surprising that this recording doesn't match up to it (and there is already available a DVD and CD of one of the VPO's concerts).

You can tell a lot from the way the opening is launched, with the tremolo strings and the great rising theme, one of Bruckner's supreme inspirations. Above all it must glow, and I'm afraid that the NRPO just doesn't, as the VPO certainly does. What we have is a fine, detailed performance – and it includes the disputed cymbal clash at the climax of the great slow movement, music to celebrate and mourn Richard Wagner – and an account in which the last two movements don't, as so often, seem an anticlimax. But with such rivals its main interest is sentimental. *Michael Tanner*

PERFORMANCE ★★★
RECORDING ★★★★

Debussy • Schoenberg

Debussy: Pelléas et Mélisande (arr. J Nott); **Schoenberg:** Pelleas und Melisande
Orchestre de la Suisse Romande/ Jonathan Nott
Pentatone PTC 5186 782 (CD/SACD) 89:15 mins

Maurice Maeterlinck's play *Pelléas et Mélisande* drew a musical response from several leading composers of its time. The two major statements were Debussy's opera and Schoenberg's symphonic poem – each completed in the early 1900s within a few years of each other, with neither composer apparently being aware of the other's project at the time. The artistic worlds occupied by each work – the understated symbolism and mystery then in vogue in Debussy's Paris, and the high-octane late Romanticism of Schoenberg's Vienna – are often regarded as polar opposites. This recording shows how, on the contrary, they can seem much closer to each other than you might expect.

Partly this relates to the Suisse Romande Orchestra's playing style – likeably soft-grained by present-day standards – in both works. Another factor is Jonathan Nott's convincing approach to the massive orchestral apparatus of Schoenberg's score, whose expressive extremes and intricate technical workings here come across as more about lyrical appeal than flaring rhetoric. That said, there's no shortage of intensity where required: the passage evoking the stagnant subterranean pools, in the legendary castle where the play is set, comes across with disturbing power. Nott's orchestral suite arranged from Debussy's opera is both substantial and imaginatively devised; it also has a built-in problem, since without the intersection of the speech-like, and in that way quite busy writing for the solo voices, the orchestral music by itself can't help sounding rather static. That said, it is played here with a consistent loveliness that absorbs and appeals in its own right. *Malcolm Hayes*

PERFORMANCE ★★★★
RECORDING ★★★★

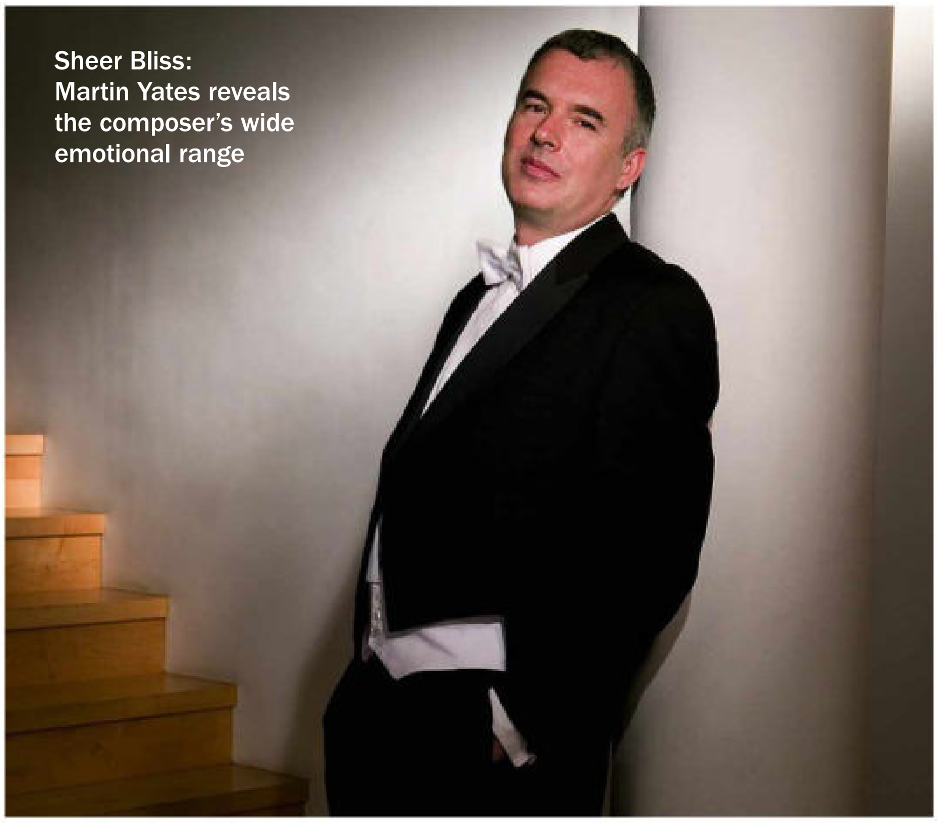
Sofia Gubaidulina

Dialog: Ich und Du*; The Wrath of God; The Light of the End
*Vadim Repin (violin); Gewandhausorchester, Leipzig/ Andris Nelsons
DG 486 1457 57:24 mins

This triptych of three recent pieces, recorded to mark Sofia Gubaidulina's 90th birthday, really need to be heard live in the concert hall for the connections between fascinating sonorities to be properly made, the role of space and silence as essential components. Andris Nelsons reports on how recording the two orchestral works with his Leipzig Gewandhaus Orchestra during lockdown in May and June 2020 'gave us a good deal of faith and confidence at this time'.

Yet there are only glimmers of the catharsis to be found in Gubaidulina's first major work for violin and orchestra, *Offertorio*. In *Dialog: Ich und du*, ostensibly her third violin concerto (the first two already recorded for DG by their respective dedicatees Gidon Kremer and Anne-Sophie Mutter), Vadim Repin remains in a more uneasy dialogue with an intermittently aggressive orchestra, passing almost beyond the bounds of audibility. *The Wrath of God* expands on the seventh movement of the oratorio *Of Love and Hatred*, and sits here as the darkest place of the triptych, low unison lines echoing what we've heard in the concerto. *The Light of the End* promises a luminosity we only get at the end; after the continuity of *Wrath of God*, we're back to fragments that somehow connect, as in late Schnittke. Full marks, anyway, to Deutsche Grammophon for standing alone among the big-name companies in documenting one of the most important musical voices of our age. *David Nice*

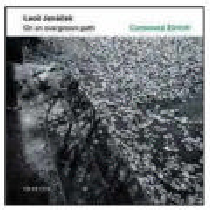
PERFORMANCE ★★★★
RECORDING ★★★★


Sheer Bliss: Martin Yates reveals the composer's wide emotional range

SUSANNE DIESNER, ERIC RICHMOND

Janáček

On An Overgrown Path (arr. Rumier); plus Dvořák: Nocturne in B, Op.40; **Suk:** Meditation on the Old Czech Chorale Saint Wenceslas
Maia Brami (speaker); Camerata Zürich/Igor Karsko (violin)
ECM 485 6433 68:32 mins



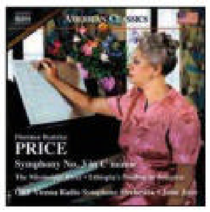
The evocative piano miniature was a favourite among Czech composers in the 19th century. Janáček's suite *On an Overgrown Path* belongs in this tradition, but unsurprisingly with a characteristically personal twist; for example 'Come with us!', number three, begins as a homely polka, but soon develops a more personal, darker aspect. This recording is very much a 'one off' to mark Camerata Zürich's 60th anniversary, presenting the pieces in arrangements for string orchestra by Daniel Rumier. Alongside the first ten of *On an Overgrown Path* are poems in French by Maïa Brami gathered at the end of the piano cycle; read by the author, they evoke the wooded Beskydy Hills where Janáček wandered in his childhood and which provide the backdrop to these deeply felt piano pieces.

Under Igor Karsko's committed direction, the playing of Camerata Zürich is superb and very well recorded, and there is a clear feeling throughout for the rich sentiment underlying these memories of youth. Karsko's tempos, however, are on the fast side: 'A leaf blown away' marked *Andante* feels closer to *Allegro*, and in many places the arresting idiosyncrasies of Janáček's piano writing fail to emerge. This approach works best in the more orchestrally conceived numbers, in particular 'The Madonna of Frýdek' where the main melody 'heard from a distance' is exquisite. To complain about such lovely playing feels churlish, but the very same expertise tends to smooth over the volatile contrasts that make these pieces so human. *Jan Smaczny*

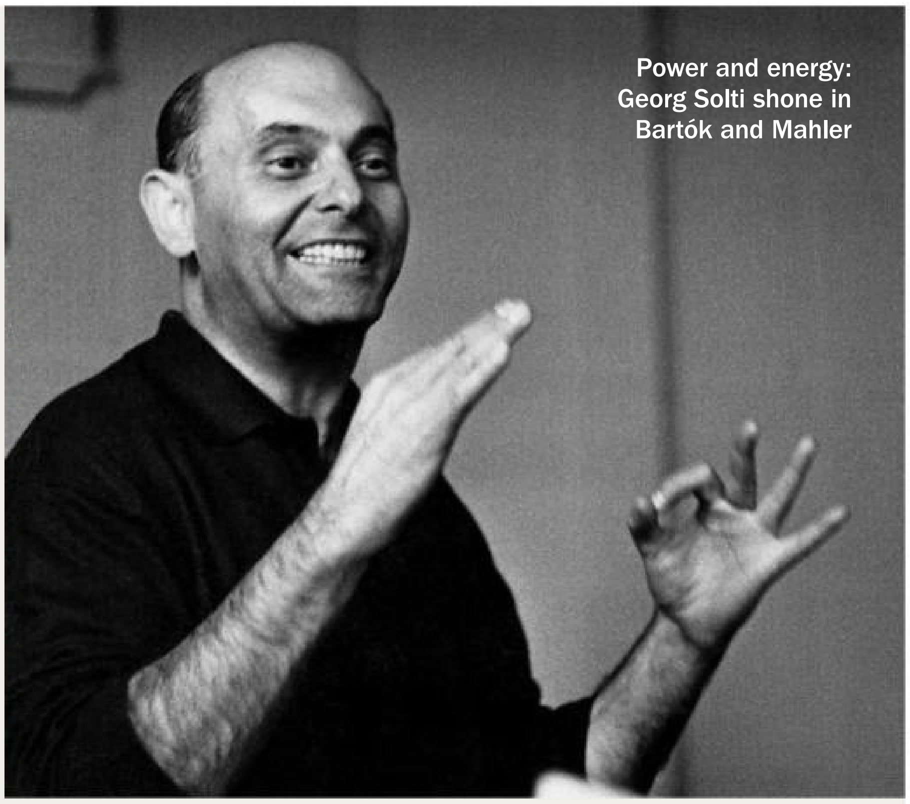
PERFORMANCE ★★★★
RECORDING ★★★★

F Price

Symphony No. 3; Ethiopia's Shadow in America; The Mississippi River
ORF Vienna Radio Symphony Orchestra/John Jeter
Naxos 8.559897 66:48 mins



If you still haven't tried the music of Florence Price, it's high time you did because you've been missing a treat. The composer was the first African-American woman to have


Power and energy: Georg Solti shone in Bartók and Mahler

From the archives

Andrew McGregor finds Georg Solti at his most fiery and inspiring during his decades recording in London

In the age of the LP, Georg Solti – along with Karajan in Berlin and Bernstein in New York City – played a huge part in the Mahler revival. And in big-band Haydn, as this set of ***Sir Georg Solti: The London Orchestral Recordings*** reminds us (*Decca 485 1717; 36 CDs*) – all 12 Haydn London Symphonies with the London Philharmonic Orchestra from the 1980s, with 101-103 duplicated from mono recordings. The *Drum Roll* Symphony is from the earliest sessions in the set, when Solti in 1949 met the Decca team that partnered him in so many recordings; it's straight, no-nonsense Haydn. There's more fizz and energy in the later sessions. That famous Solti drive renders the Mozart Piano Concertos with Alicia de Larrocha rather charmless; neither this nor the Beethoven Violin Concerto with Mischa Elman feels like a meeting of musical minds. On the other hand, the Suppé and Rossini overtures and Offenbach's *Gaîté Parisienne* make a thrilling introduction to the fast-driven fun of Solti's style and sound.

The four 1960s LSO Mahler recordings, superbly produced, often seem preferable to the brasher Chicago accounts, especially Symphonies Nos 1 & 9 which still bewitch with their atmosphere and adrenaline. Then there's Solti's Elgar: noble, radiant, lovingly shaped readings of the two symphonies, an emotionally telling Violin Concerto with Kyung-Wha Chung, *Cockaigne* and *Alassio* propelled with infectious zest and the *Enigma Variations*. No English reserve here, but European romanticism, which also pays dividends in Rachmaninov's Piano Concerto No. 2 with Julius Katchen, on disc for the first time. It's worth the price of admission for Solti's fellow Hungarians: Liszt symphonic poems, Kodály's *Háry János* and *Psalmus Hungaricus*, and especially Bartók. Dark power and restless energy propel *Bluebeard's Castle*; Chung and Ashkenazy are excellent soloists in the Bartók concertos; the Concerto for Orchestra is exhilarating and witty; and *The Miraculous Mandarin* glows with magical, malevolent colours.

BBC RADIO 3 90–93FM

Andrew McGregor is the presenter of Radio 3's *Record Review*, broadcast each Saturday morning from 9am until 11.45am

a symphony performed by a major orchestra – the Chicago Symphony – and in her lifetime she enjoyed a very good degree of recognition. But after her death in 1953, Price's works vanished from view: racism, sexism and a then-fashionable academic scorn for tonal music all had a role to play. When a treasure-trove of her manuscripts turned up about 12 years ago, it aided a gathering surge of interest in her music, and not before time.

Price draws directly on the music and history of her cultural heritage – the Juba dance in the Symphony No. 3, the spirituals she suggests in *The Mississippi River* and the programmatic outline of *Ethiopia's Shadow in America* are just a few examples – and she fuses all this seamlessly with classical language and structures. The orchestration is vivid and slightly post-Dvořák in nature; the atmosphere can transport us to her time and place, yet never feels dated.

The result in this recording is not only inspiring but enjoyable, and not only interesting for our times but of splendid and durable quality. The ORF and Jeter provide lively, well balanced and sympathetically played accounts, with good, clear recorded sound – a valuable addition to any library and performances that will not only help the increasing recognition this music deserves, but will be enjoyed time and again. *Jessica Duchen*

PERFORMANCE ★★★★
RECORDING ★★★★

Prokofiev • Schnittke

Prokofiev: Symphony No. 2; **Schnittke:** Concerto for Piano and Strings
Yefim Bronfman (piano); Cleveland Orchestra/Franz Welser-Möst
Cleveland Orchestra TCO0003 (CD/SACD) 54:14 mins

It's exciting to witness an American orchestra go daring in these difficult times. Franz Welser-Möst, the Cleveland Orchestra's music director, may not be the most visceral of conductors, and that results in an often interesting perspective on Prokofiev's usually wild Second Symphony. But his thoughtfulness is on display in a booklet article which manages to steer the right side of preachiness. This is certainly a fascinating double-bill. I didn't know Schnittke's Concerto for Piano and Strings of 1979, but it's a vintage work with a spellbinding start from the soloist – the great Yefim Bronfman, capable of both the pearly otherworldliness required at both ends of the concerto but also of massive weight as chord-clusters accumulate and a pounding waltz threatens to break the work's back half way through. The strings try and pull the piano earthwards, but there's an escape to the ether at the end as arresting as the one Prokofiev gives the cellist at the end of his Symphony-Concerto.

In live performance you might want more drive in the first movement of Prokofiev Two, but excellent recorded balance allows one to absorb the tone-colours of America's best brass and all the inner details of a dense score indebted to the 'style mécanique' of Honegger's *Pacific 231* (piano and castanets make an impact I've not heard before). Haunting atmosphere abounds in the ensuing variations, but the ultimate heavy-metal could do with a bit more shove. Still, you're left with infinite respect for what Prokofiev was trying to achieve in his most consciously modernistic score. *David Nice*

PERFORMANCE ★★★★
RECORDING ★★★★

Americascapes

H Cowell: Variations for Orchestra; **H Hanson:** Before the Dawn, Op. 17; **Loeffler:** La Mort de Tintagiles; **Ruggles:** Evocations
Basque National Orchestra/Robert Trevino
Ondine ODE 1396-2 70:52 mins

A Finnish recording company, an orchestra from northern Spain: the obvious make-up these days for an album poking into some of American music's less-visited corners. The galvanising force is Robert Trevino, the orchestra's gifted Mexican-American conductor, who has shaped a programme of American musical landscapes both pleasurable and baffling. The first and best work is Charles Martin Loeffler's *La Mort de Tintagiles* of 1897, a fruity symphonic poem inspired by a Maeterlinck play, soaked in the spirit of *fin de siècle* gloom, decadence and early Richard Strauss. This sweeps

you up in its opening bars and never lets you go; a tribute both to Loeffler's invention and the Basque forces' lustre. In comparison, Howard Hanson's *Before the Dawn* of 1920 (a first recording) can only appear craftsmanlike but insubstantial, and as vague in import as its title.

A bigger question is what Carl Ruggles's *Evocations* evoke beyond the obdurate personality of its composer, who originally chiselled these four brusque pieces for piano, then dipped them in darkly effective orchestral colours in 1943. Then there's Henry Cowell, no longer the modernist piano basher in his 1956 Variations for Orchestra, more of a wide-eyed musical traveller crossing all continents and conventions. Parts are unprepossessing, including the original theme; but it's hard to resist the tuneful rumpus of the variation scored for piano and percussion, or the eerie magic of muted brass floating over softly discordant strings. Ondine's vivid recording and the Basque orchestra's flair keep you listening and pondering. *Geoff Brown*

PERFORMANCE ★★★★
RECORDING ★★★★

Scenes from the Kalevala

Works by Klami, Madetoja, Pylkkänen and Sibelius
Lahti Symphony Orchestra/ Dima Slobodeniouk
BIS BIS-2371 (CD/SACD) 70:43 mins

Publication of the *Kalevala* in 1835 (expanded 1849) marked a watershed in Finland's journey to independence from Russia and, before that, Sweden. A collection of epic folk poems and myths rooted in oral tradition, it stirred a pride in Finnish language and culture that found preeminent musical expression in the youthful Sibelius (1865-1957) – who would become a national hero to rival those within its pages.

Yet Sibelius was only one composer to be inspired by the *Kalevala*. This enterprising album from the Lahti Symphony Orchestra and conductor Dima Slobodeniouk sets the world premiere recording of his pre-fame, much-shortened 1897 revision of *Lemminkäinen Tuonelassa*, Op. 22 No. 2 alongside works by three younger compatriots.

Leevi Madetoja (1887-1947) and Tauno Pylkkänen (1918-80) might themselves be separated by age, but their respective *Kullervo*, Op. 15 (1913) and *Kullervon sotaanlähtö* (Kullervo Goes to War, 1942) were both early works, and further share with the Sibelius a lush romantic style.

While their elder conjures in translucent textures the otherworldly darkness of Lemminkäinen's sojourn in the Land of the Dead, Madetoja and Pylkkänen opt for galloping drama and pathos in depicting the tormented Kullervo. All handle the orchestra with confidence, the younger two composers contrasting exuberant themes and fanfares with lighter, more lyrical episodes.

Anxious to avoid comparisons with Sibelius, Uuno Klami (1900-61) turned to primitivist Stravinsky in his later *Kalevala Suite*, Op. 23 (1943). Ironically, the result owes somewhat unsubtle debts to the *Rite* and *Firebird*, but is performed with verve. *Steph Power*

PERFORMANCE ★★★
RECORDING ★★★★

BACKGROUND TO...

Prokofiev's *Symphony No. 2*

When Prokofiev first settled in Paris in 1923, the French capital was under the sway of Stravinsky and *Les six*. Prokofiev's first Parisian success was the revised version of his Piano Concerto No. 2, which he himself performed in a concert conducted by Koussevitzky in 1924. Premiered in that same concert was Honegger's *Pacific 231*, which provoked Prokofiev into writing his Second Symphony (1925). Declaring he would compose a work of 'iron and steel', Prokofiev based its structure on that of Beethoven's last piano sonata – a sonata-form first movement followed by a set of variations on a theme.

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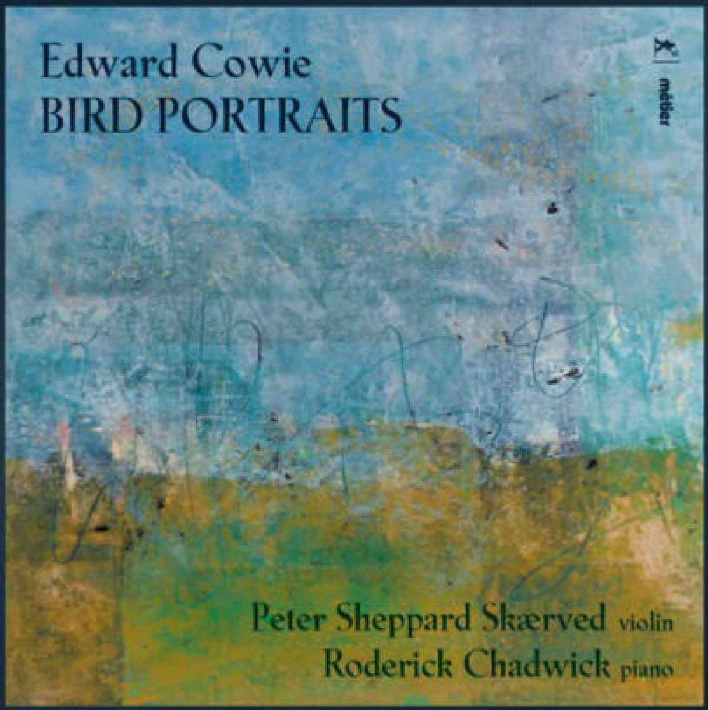

EDWARD COWIE: BIRD PORTRAITS
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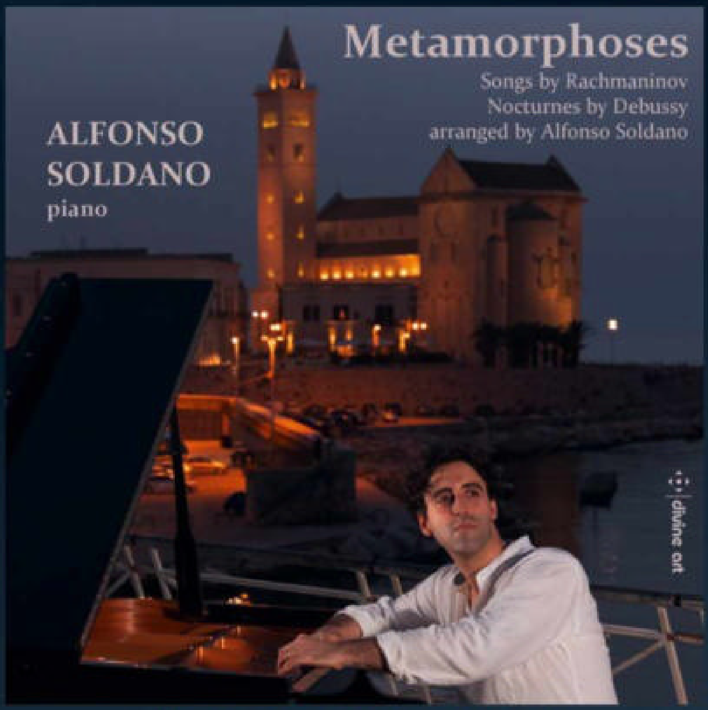
Peter Sheppard Skærved (violin), Roderick Chadwick (piano)
Métier MSV 28619



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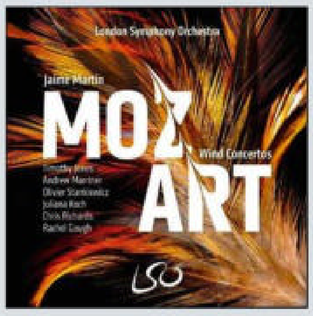
Concerto

CONCERTO CHOICE



A spirited Mozart display from beginning to end

Malcolm Hayes enjoys a stellar cast of soloists in the LSO's striking Mozart Wind Concertos collection

A fine all-rounder: Olivier Stankiewicz shines in the Oboe Concerto

Mozart

Horn Concerto No. 2; Oboe Concerto; Clarinet Concerto; Sinfonia concertante; Serenade No. 10 'Gran Partita'
Olivier Stankiewicz (oboe), Andrew Marriner (clarinet), Timothy Jones (horn); London Symphony Orchestra/ Jaime Martín
LSO Live LSO 0855 (CD/SACD) 141:18 mins (2 discs)

You would expect the principal woodwind players of a team in the London Symphony Orchestra's league to perform at stellar technical level. Even more striking, and highly appealing besides, is the musical spirit that's in evidence here throughout, and which suits Mozart's music to near perfection. A sequence of alert and personable orchestral accompaniments under Jaime Martín (slightly reduced vibrato from the strings) underpins solo playing that reflects the different solo characters involved in, as it happens, three very different works. If the Second Horn Concerto gives Timothy Jones rather less fine material to work with than his colleagues, Olivier Stankiewicz engages happily with the Oboe Concerto's inventive poise, and includes two contrasted solo cadenzas – super-virtuoso in the first movement, much simpler in the finale – showing how a fine all-round musician can deliver both ways.

Andrew Marriner's approach to the Clarinet Concerto offers a similar kind of unpretentious mastery; the loveliness of the *Adagio* second movement's main theme here really does seem to be coming to us from some other musical planet.

Andrew Marriner offers unpretentious mastery in the Clarinet Concerto

Besides Jones's presence again, the Sinfonia concertante for oboe, clarinet, bassoon and horn features a different and equally fine solo line-up in Juliana Koch, Chris Richards and Rachel Gough. And the 13-strong team assembled for the *Gran Partita* Serenade confirm its status as one of Mozart's fabulous masterworks in the genre, with playing that's winsome, stylish and, in the 'Theme and Variations' sixth of the seven movements, mesmerisingly gorgeous.

PERFORMANCE ★★★★★
RECORDING ★★★★

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Beethoven

Piano Concertos Nos 4 & 6, arr. by the composer after the Violin Concerto, Op. 61a
Gianluca Cascioli (piano); Ensemble Resonanz/Riccardo Minasi
Harmonia Mundi HMM 902422
76:47 mins

As a pianist specialising in historically-informed performance, Gianluca Cascioli has form. His Chopin recording for Decca was founded on his research into historical recordings, plus testimonies from pupils and teachers going back to the composer himself, and the results of that research made illuminating listening.

For this new recording, Cascioli and his conductor Riccardo Minasi have chosen to depart from contemporary performance convention, using historical precedent as justification: first, in Beethoven's day performance practices varied widely, with the composer noting down many variants to his Fourth Concerto as he encountered them; secondly, when he played it, he did so *sehr muthwillig* – 'with the addition of many notes'. Cascioli and Minasi call on Czerny as witness that, in the second movement, piano and orchestra originally played at slightly different tempos with the piano always slower. And their aim throughout has been to calibrate the dynamics, so as to restore the balance of a period orchestra while using a modern piano.

The results are mixed, and so is the recording quality. The luxuriously arpeggiated chord with which Cascioli opens the Fourth is an attention-grabbing gesture, as is the sudden jolting silence before the start of the development – more suggestive of a disc fault than of an organic part of the performance. Although the pianism is finely articulated, the whole movement feels more like a string of loosely-connected thoughts: it has no sweep. Meanwhile the difference between the tempos of soloist and orchestra in the *Andante* feels factitious.

On the plus side, Beethoven's transcription of his Violin Concerto for piano and orchestra here works well, after a necessarily weak piano entry – grace-notes can't compete

with the violin's majestic opening; and the *Larghetto* has serene beauty under Cascioli's sensitive leadership. *Michael Church*

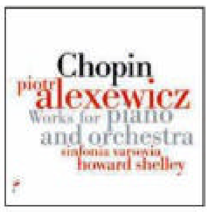
PERFORMANCE ★★★
RECORDING ★★

Chopin

Variations on Mozart's 'Là ci darem la mano', Op. 2; Fantasia on Polish Airs, Op. 13; Krakowiak, Op. 14; Andante spianato & Grande Polonaise, Op. 22

Piotr Alexewicz (piano); Sinfonia Varsovia/Howard Shelley

NIFC NIFCCD201 64:30 mins



One of the leading young Polish pianists of his generation, Piotr Alexewicz enjoyed a deservedly enthusiastic following at the Chopin Competition in Warsaw this autumn, getting as far as the third stage. Still only 21, he is clearly developing fast as a musician, now bringing the Chopinesque fantasy and sensitivity that were less evident when this recording was made in 2019. All six of Chopin's works for piano and orchestra are indeed a young man's music – five were written before the composer left Poland for good, aged only 20 – and by eschewing the well-known concertos and focusing on the less frequently played pieces, Alexewicz's programme has fresh appeal.

Yet the performances sound slightly too generalised. The *style brillante* that informs all these works calls not only for the technical brilliance that Alexewicz possesses but a certain *joie de vivre* in short supply here. Chopin's tribute to his beloved Mozart in the Variations on 'Là ci darem' could do with more sparkling brio, even if the rapid-fire articulation of the second variation (*Veloce, ma accuratamente*) is exhilarating in its way. Lighter textures in the *Fantasy on Polish Airs* would also be welcome; both this and the *Rondo à la Krakowiak* sound a bit proto-Bartókian in places where elegant zest is needed. But even the *Andante spianato et Grande Polonaise brillante* lacks its ultimate sense of spine-tingling magic, Alexewicz certainly understands the music's Polish genes. *John Allison*

PERFORMANCE ★★★
RECORDING ★★★★

Saint-Saëns

Violin Concertos Nos 1 & 3; Introduction & Rondo capriccioso; Havanaise; Romance in C; Samson et Dalila – Mon cœur s'ouvre à ta voix

Jinjoo Cho (violin); Appassionato/Mathieu Herzog

Naïve V7422 77:06 mins

Released just in the nick of time for the 2021 Saint-Saëns anniversary, this recording of violin works comes from North America-based Korean violinist Jinjoo Cho and French conductor, and sometime Quatuor Ébène co-founder Mathieu Herzog with his chamber orchestra, Appassionato. Cho, who herself founded a festival for young chamber musicians, here bookends the composer's first and third violin concertos – the latter one of his great works – with well known shorter pieces.

Cho has a highly polished, sustained tone and much expression, too, with clean articulation and charisma in her playing in Saint-Saëns's *Introduction and Rondo Capriccioso*. There is a sweet-toned and tender *Havanaise*, too, before the first programmed of the Violin Concertos – here, the Third – and Saint-Saëns's best known. If Cho's sound is perhaps a little too civilised in the opening of the *Allegro* – and *Appassionato* – Cho finds the exquisiteness in the *Andantino*.

The much shorter Violin Concerto No. 1 follows, just 12 minutes long, a playing with form that sees a run-through *Allegro* enclosing an *Andante*, filled with intensity. Cho charts it all effortlessly, along with a heartfelt adaptation by Herzog of the aria 'Mon cœur s'ouvre a ta voix' from the composer's opera, *Samson and Delila*, for violin and orchestra. The CD liner notes contain no information on the works. *Sarah Urwin Jones*

PERFORMANCE ★★★
RECORDING ★★★

Polish and poise: Jinjoo Cho shows great charisma in Saint-Saëns

BACKGROUND TO...
Saint-Saëns's *Havanaise*

One of Saint-Saëns's most familiar refrains, the *Havanaise* was composed in 1887 and was dedicated to the Cuban violinist Rafael Díaz Albertini. The pair shared a tour in the years prior and it's then that Saint-Saëns came up with the main melody – apparently inspired by the rhythm of a crackling fire in a hotel room. Whether that's true or not, the composer's interest in music from other cultures, coupled with time spent with Albertini, will surely have ignited his imagination. The short work is based on the Cuban habañera dance rhythm and was originally written for violin and piano.

KAUPO KIKKAS, KYU TAE SHIM, GETTY

Pyrotechnia – *Fire & Fury from 18th-Century Italy*

Concertos by Vivaldi, Tartini & Locatelli

The Illyria Consort/Bojan Čičić (violin)

Delphian DCD 34249 72:52 mins

Vivaldi took the notion of what the virtuosic violin concerto might be to new heights; and it was he who cultivated the idea of the extended show-stopping cadenza. Taking this as his starting point, Bojan Čičić pits himself against four virtuoso concertos from the Italian golden age, and pairs two by the 'Red Priest' with one each by the 20-years-younger Tartini and Locatelli. Three are in the dazzlingly bright key of D, while Tartini ratchets up a tone to E major, so have 'aural sunglasses' at the ready to counteract the glare. Reconstructed by Olivier Fourés, Vivaldi's concerto 'per Signora Anna Maria' is a premiere recording.

As leader of The Academy of Ancient Music (and director of the Illyria Consort), Čićić scarcely needs to prove his credentials through the medium of the virtuosic solo. The recording, instead, traces the impact of the capriccio-cadenza on the concerto form, and its evolution from shortish burst to the finale of Locatelli's Op. 3 No. 12 (which, at 15 minutes, outlasts either of the Vivaldi concertos in their entirety – albeit with a lot of grandstanding gamely shouldered by the unflappable Čičič). In truth though, all three composers at times coast on compositional autopilot; and the 'fire and fury' of the disc's title proves a hostage to fortune when, as in the first movement of Vivaldi's Concerto RV205, there's a sense of something being held back, the excitement contained. That said, the extravagantly ornamented *Largo* is delectably poised and ethereal, whilst Čičič makes characteristically light work of the scintillating capriccio repurposed from RV774. *Paul Riley*

PERFORMANCE ★★★★
RECORDING ★★★★

OPERA CHOICE

Great performances make Mozart's *Mitridate* soar

This teenage work shows the composer's age but the musicians save the day, says ***Christopher Cook***

A handsome account: Michael Spyres stars as the titular King

EDOUARD BRANE

Mozart

Mitridate, re di Ponto

Michael Spyres, Julie Fuchs, Sabine Devieilhe ; Les Musiciens de Louvre/Marc Minkowski

Erato 9029661757 150:31 mins (3 discs)

How remarkable that a 14 year-old should have scored a hit with his fifth work for the stage, and in Milan too. However, Mozart is still learning his craft – although helped by a strongly dramatic libretto from Racine's tragedy about Mitridate, an Asian potentate defeated by Rome, caught up in emotional and political tangles woven by his two sons Sifare and Farnace. The arias, often *da capo*, are sometimes in the florid style admired by an earlier generation, and when inspiration falters Mozart sends for the drums and marching.

Yet already we can hear the composer's remarkable gift for composing from 'inside' his characters. Sifare's Act II aria 'Lungi da te' opens with hushed horns and strings as he bids farewell to his beloved Aspase, and is sung with complete conviction by the soprano Elsa Dreisig. We feel and hear the not-so-sweet sorrow of parting. Minutes later Julie Fuchs's Aspasia meditates on love and duty with dazzling decoration, a woman divided against herself musically as well as personally. Julie Fuchs is one of the excitements of this recording, all but stopping the show with 'Pallid'ombre'; and so is Michael Spyres as Mitridate with a handsome account of the king's opening number 'Se di lauri', which caused the composer such grief with his tenor in Milan in 1770.

The hero here and throughout is the conductor Marc Minkowski

Yet the hero here and throughout is the conductor Marc Minkowski with a crisp and considered account of this score. Frankly his Les Musiciens du Louvre make you forget when young Mozart is padding.

PERFORMANCE ★★★★★
RECORDING ★★★★★

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Brian

Faust

Peter Hoare, David Soar, Allison Cook, William Morgan, Robert Hayward, Elgan Llŷr Thomas, Simon Bailey, David Ireland, Katie Coventry, Nicholas Lester, Clare Presland, Claire Mitcher; Chorus & Orchestra of English National Opera/Martyn Brabbins

Dutton Epoch 2CDLX 7385 (CD/SACD) 135:22 mins (2 discs)

It remains an utterly remarkable fact that Havergal Brian, whose career began quite promisingly, managed to continue to produce so much music over the later decades when his output was totally neglected. One of five operas, *Faust* was written in 1955-56 and sets his own reduction of Goethe's text in the original German. This recording represents its world premiere.

In a prologue and two acts, the opera is a remarkable achievement. In terms of style, John Pickard is surely correct to identify in his programme note a kinship with the Hindemith of *Mathis der Maler*; other than that, the regularly dark, often thick scoring possesses a kind of rough grandeur that has its own integrity. The result is consistently impressive.

For various reasons, including its own reluctance to go anywhere near showbiz (which a number of other *Faust* settings profitably have), it is unlikely to gain wide popularity; but it is nonetheless a major achievement, and both Dutton and the performers, notably Martyn Brabbins – a loyal Brian champion, here conducting his own ENO forces – have put listeners in their debt. Their recording demands attention.

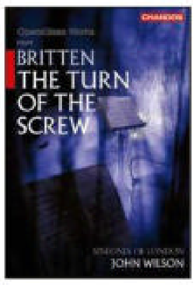
The central roles are all well done. Tenor Peter Hoare summons up the entire range and expressive variety required for Faust. David Soar's voluminous bass-baritone enables him to go right down into the vocal depths of Mephistopheles. Mezzo-soprano Allison Cook brings certainty and determination to her impassioned Gretchen. In secondary roles, baritone Nicholas Lester epitomises the bluff, aggressive soldier Valentin, while bass-baritone Simon Bailey

registers powerful presence as the Evil Spirit. *George Hall*

PERFORMANCE ★★★★★
RECORDING ★★★★★

Britten

The Turn of the Screw (DVD)
Robert Murray, Rhian Lois, Leo Jermison, Alys Mereld Roberts, Gweneth Ann Rand, Francesca Chiejina; Sinfonia of London/ John Wilson
Chandos CHDVD 5290 112:46 mins



This OperaGlass Works production was planned for actual staging in Wilton's Music Hall in Shadwell. When Covid intervened, the company decided to film it instead, not only utilising the full auditorium but every balcony and dark passageway of the building's artfully restored dilapidation. In addition to the cast in their early Victorian costumes, we catch fleeting glimpses of camera operators, conductor or individual instrumentalists in odd corners, as if covertly complicit in the action.

The production by Selina Cadell and Eliza Thompson has its puzzles: why does Miles mime his piano playing on a music stand when a real piano is just feet away; and why, at the end, does he fall into a reverie rather than die, while it is the Governess who sinks to the stage? But the mounting horror of the piece is effectively conveyed.

It is also strongly cast. Robert Murray is as immaculate of diction in the Prologue as he is seductively lyrical as the ghostly Quint. Rhian Lois's every inflection and gesture projects the Governess's barely controlled hysteria. Thirteen-year old Leo Jemison not only sings Miles to perfection but suggests inner torment through his very stillness of manner. Gweneth Ann Rand is a warmly sympathetic Mrs Grose; Alys Mererid Roberts a wildly impetuous Flora and Francesca Chiejina looms forlornly as the unfortunate Miss Jessel. John Wilson conducts 13 members of his Sinfonia of London with needle-sharp definition in tempos close to Britten's own classic 1955 recording, and the Chandos recording enhances this haunting opera's eerie fragility of sound. *Bayan Northcott*

PERFORMANCE ★★★★
PICTURE & SOUND ★★★★

Handel

Solo Arias, Duets, Overtures and Sinfonias from Serse, Rinaldo, Jephtha, Solomon, Ariodante, Rodelinda, Alcina and Giulio Cesare in Egitto
Barnaby Smith (countertenor), Mary Bevan, Catriona McDermid (soprano), Bojan Čičić (violin); The Illyria Consort/Gavin Edwards
Voces8 Records VCM136 63:03 mins

For his debut solo album, countertenor Barnaby Smith, director of the choir VOCES8, sings favourite Handel arias. Smith tells us that the pandemic lockdown gave him the chance to fulfil a longstanding ambition to probe Handel's operatic voice with his own.

Smith's instrument is sweet, intense and bursting with colours, qualities which peak in the lyricism of 'Ombra mai fù' (*Serse*), 'Cara sposa' (*Rinaldo*), 'Scherza infida' (*Ariodante*) and 'Verdi prati' (*Alcina*). He exploits the music's lines to bold effect, adding shockingly high vaults in repeat sections. Smith's shapely phrases, like his blistering speed and crisp passagi in 'Venti turbini' (*Rinaldo*), are indebted to muscle and musicianship alike. Handel star Mary Bevan joins Smith for three duets; as ever, her poise and power, even at stratospheric heights, are a feast for the ears. Topping off Smith's and Bevan's dazzling singing is the playing of The Illyria Consort, whose elegance is particularly evident in obbligato parts and the recording's two instrumental tracks.

Sadly, the bouncy acoustic of the church of St Anne and St Agnes – home to the VOCES8 Foundation – undercuts this recording. Silence, often the portal to Handel's most emotive moments, is absent. The sexy warmth of Handel's love arias is lost, as is his creamy blend of vocal and instrumental textures. Singers' exclamatory top notes eclipse subtler passages, which themselves are few. The acoustic clatter also seems to undercut the singers' ability to hear and spontaneously react to the band. So, while the music-making itself is gorgeous, the musical drama of each number can be hard to catch. *Berta Joncus*

PERFORMANCE ★★★
RECORDING ★★★

Moniuszko

Halka
Natalia Rubiś, Przemysław Borys, Sebastian Szumski; Capella Cracoviensis/Jan Tomasz Adamus
Deutsches Harmonia Mundi 19439900642 80:39 mins (2 discs)

Stanisław Moniuszko's *Halka* is a paradox, a national opera but not nationalist in any way. Rather than being Polish in its symbolism, *Halka*'s plot is universal in its appeal and typical of the 19th century's wider interest in the *Giselle* stereotype. Yet one of the opera's most famous (and justly celebrated) numbers is the invigorating mazurka that closes Act I in the revised, four-act version of the opera as given in Warsaw in 1858; that and several other of the score's hits are absent from the two-act version premiered in Vilnius a decade earlier, on New Year's Day 1848. This earlier edition – recorded for the first time on period instruments – is a much slenderer work, but one in which the drama flows with poignant directness.

Such an impression is certainly reinforced by this welcome recording, in which the freshness of Moniuszko's inspiration shines through. The soprano Natalia Rubiś brings radiance to the title role, Przemysław Borys's dusky tenor is distinctive as her loyal Jontek, and the baritone Sebastian Szumski is suitably aloof as the betraying nobleman Janusz. The warm playing and singing of the Capella Cracoviensis under the baton of Jan Tomasz Adamus is beautifully captured, drawing the listener into the pathos of the piece. *John Allison*

PERFORMANCE ★★★★
RECORDING ★★★★

Monteverdi

Daylight: Stories of Song, Dances and Loves
Monica Piccinini, Raffaele Giordani, Salvo Vitale; Concerto Italiano/ Rinaldo Alessandrini
Naïve OP 7366 57:36 mins

This is a sequel to Rinaldo Alessandrini's 2017 Monteverdi recording, *Night: Stories of Lovers and Warriors*. It takes the story onwards to dawn with works celebrating the joys of dancing and singing in the sunlight, and the playful exchanges between lovers. Alessandrini tells us that this is his 'ultimate and definitive' expression of the love he has borne for Monteverdi for 40 years.

The celebratory mood is conveyed in energetic dance songs such *Alle danze* and the livelier madrigals and duets. As for the late operas by Monteverdi these were never recorded by Alessandrini, though he gives us a glimpse of what we have missed, particularly in the playful and flirtatious duet 'Duri e Penosi' from *Il ritorno d'Ulisse*, magically performed by Sonia Tedla and Valerio Contaldo. With so many of Monteverdi's famous pieces included, it is tempting (if perhaps unfair) to make comparisons with great recordings of the past. The account here of the ravishing duet 'Chiome d'oro' though pleasing cannot quite match the rhythmic alertness and bell-like radiance of the performance by Emma Kirkby and Evelyn Tubb (on the Alto label), and the same is true of the duet 'Zefiro torna' compared with the bravura presentation by Ian Partridge and Nigel Rogers (on Archiv). That said, Alessandrini has fashioned a joyous coherence to this disc and, moreover, we should remember that his legacy extends much further than can be encompassed by a single recording. *Anthony Pryer*

PERFORMANCE ★★★★
RECORDING ★★★★

Rameau

Platée
Marcel Beekman, Jeanine De Bique, Cyril Auvity, Marc Mauillon; Les Arts Florissants/William Christie
Harmonia Mundi HAF8905349.50 134:01 mins (2 discs)

William Christie's *Platée* is a hard-won triumph. In 2014, heart surgery kept him from conducting the premiere of the opera's new production which opened at Theater an der Wien. Leading its 2020 revival with most of the same performers, Christie faced an empty house as Covid-19 forced audiences to watch remotely.

Platée is a parody, and a masterpiece. Rameau weaponised French serious opera to satirise his society's ills, mixing beauty with

mockery. Action revolves around Platée, an ill-favoured swamp nymph longing for love. Jupiter, hoping to cure Juno of her jealousy, pretends to love Platée, whose ugliness will convince Juno that he never intended to stray. Platée is humiliated.

To dramatise this cruel tale, Rameau toggles between elegance in instrumental movements and noble dances, and satire in pseudo-tragic solos and overblown choruses. Under Christie, overtures and dances are terse, with tense articulation and precise meter. While carefully shaping soloists' ensembles, Christie gives tenor Marcel Beekman, cross-dressed in the title role, the latitude needed to nail his part. Beekman is riveting, his outrageous vocalism creating a Platée who is ludicrous yet sympathetic. The band shows its mettle by making the contrast between straight and comic French Baroque execution unmistakable.

But without a live audience, the first-act soloists strain to impress, and by Act II the chorus entries get a bit sloppy. The stunning visuals of this *Platée* production eclipse such momentary musical lapses, so you might want the DVD as well.

Berta Joncus

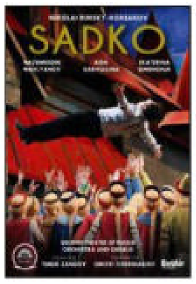
PERFORMANCE ★★★★
RECORDING ★★★★

Rimsky-Korsakov

Sadko (DVD)

Nazhmiddin Mavlyanov, Aida Garifullina, Ekaterina Semenchuk; Bolshoi Theater Orchestra/Timur Zangiev; dir. Dmitri Tcherniakov (Moscow, 2020)

Bel Air Classiques DVD: BAC188; Blu-ray: BAC488 186 mins (2 discs)



Perhaps it's the Russianness of Rimsky's operas that makes them hard to export. A folk story of the would-be troubadour Sadko winning a fortune thanks to the Princess Volkhova, youngest daughter of the Sea Tsar, who as a final gift gives the city of Novgorod a river to the sea, somehow belongs East of the Ukraine.

Dmitri Tcherniakov's Bolshoi production puts Sadko, his wife Lubava and the sea Princess into modern dress with each interviewed about their hopes and wishes before the curtain rises on what appears to be an ironised version of how Russians see their own patriotic history. The 'heroic' life Sadko longs for is a fantasy with the Mother Russia sets wheeled about by an army of proletarian technicians in overalls and yellow forage caps. Mind you, you are unlikely to see the lavish fish costumes for the under-the-sea wedding between Sadko and Volkhova this side of a Black Sea resort wedding.

A Russian fantasy: the Bolshoi's production of Rimsky's *Sadko*

DAMIR YUSUPOV

Nazhmiddin Mavlyanov is a sturdy Sadko, scarcely ever off the stage. While Aida Garifullina's Princess Volkhova, flitting about in an unflattering tie-dye nightie, is a distinctly Slav soprano with a tendency to push the voice too hard. As the abandoned wife Lubava, Ekaterina Semenchuk is a 'grumpy' mezzo. Rightly, the solo for the Varangian Merchant (Dmitry Ulianov) who will accompany Sadko on his voyages stops the show. But it's Rimsky's sparkling score that really shines and the luxuriant tone painting of a master orchestrator with the Bolshoi orchestra under Timur Zangiev give it their best best.

Christopher Cook

PERFORMANCE ★★★★
PICTURE & SOUND ★★★★

Hans Thomalla

Dark Spring

Shachar Lavi, Anna Hybiner, Christopher Diffey, Magid El-Bauhra; Nationaltheater-Orchester Mannheim/Alan Pierson

Oehms OC 994 85:35 mins (2 discs)

Wedekind's controversial play *Spring Awakening* (1891) broke new ground in tackling sex-related abuses suffered by teenagers in an oppressive *fin de siècle* society. German-American composer Hans Thomalla sees parallels today and omits all adult characters for *Dark Spring*, focusing on mental health and the difficulty youngsters experience in articulating hopelessness and alienation.

Wendla, Ilse, Melchior and Moritz face existential crises brought on by a toxic performance culture encompassing sex, friendship and academia. Thomalla explores each of their voices in song (lyrics by Joshua Clover), through harrowing events including rape, physical violence and suicide. The cast's performances are sterling, and the subtly wrought score, given a committed performance by the 11-piece Nationaltheatre-Orchester Mannheim under Alan Pierson, mixes American song, gently propulsive minimalism, electronics and avant-garde extended techniques to effect. Yet the results are strangely cold and un-engaging.

In song after song, the teenagers repeat over and over their inner contradictions and struggles to find meaning, the music often slow-paced and perhaps itself intended to reflect their traumatised disassociation. Ultimately, however, they become cyphers for their condition rather than red-blooded characters about whom we care.

Steph Power

PERFORMANCE ★★★
RECORDING ★★★★

Weinberg

The Passenger

Dshamila Kaiser, Nadja Stefanoff, Will Hartmann, Markus Butter; Graz Opera Chorus; Graz Philharmonic/Roland Kluttig

Capriccio C5455 156:05 mins (2 discs)

With two much-admired DVD releases of this harrowing opera currently available, a new audio recording, drawn from performances by the Graz Opera in February 2021, might seem surplus to requirements. Yet the opportunity to focus solely on the music, undistracted by any idiosyncrasies that accompany a stage production, has actually enhanced my appreciation of Weinberg's score. This is particularly the case with some of the flashback scenes in Act II that take place in Auschwitz. In the world premiere 2010 Bregenz Festival DVD (on Arthaus), the dramatic tension in these sections of the opera seemed to waver, partly as a result of the relatively static action on stage. But I didn't sense the same problem in this recording which projects a greater lyrical poignancy, not least in the extended arias by Marta and Katja in Scene 6 which are beautifully sung here by Nadja Stefanoff and Tetyana Miyus.

Of course, there are other moments in Weinberg's opera, such as the traumatic climax where Marta's violinist fiancé Tadeusz is brutally attacked by SS guards for playing the Bach Chaconne instead of the demanded popular waltz, which cry out for visual representation. Yet once again, thanks to the strongly projected playing of the Grazer Philharmoniker under Roland Kluttig, the shattering impact of this scene is by no means undermined.

Capriccio's engineers have done a fine job in securing a good balance between singers and orchestra, the only slight disappointment being the backwardly placed chorus whose words are not always audible.

Erik Levi

PERFORMANCE ★★★★
RECORDING ★★★★

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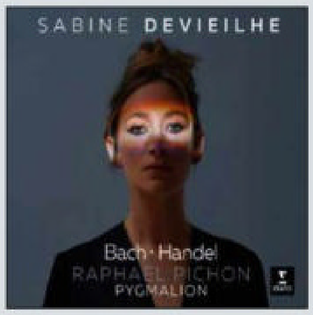

A tour de force of JS Bach and Handel

Nicholas Anderson **is beguiled by Sabine Devieilhe's shimmering performance**

JS Bach • Handel

JS Bach: Cantata 'Mein Herze schwimmt im Blut', BWV 199; Cantata 'Jauchzet Gott in allen Landen', BWV 51 etc.; **Handel:** Brockes Passion, HWV 48 etc
Sabine Devieilhe (soprano); Pygmalion/Raphaël Pichon
Erato 9029667786 83:37 mins

An initial glance sometimes tells us that this is the kind of programme which falters at the first hurdle. A *potpourri* of secular and sacred music with little in the way of an over-all concept. Here, though, is a thoughtful assembly of music depicting affliction and repentance on the one hand and joy and desire on the other.

The recording finds Sabine Devieilhe on sparkling form. Bach and Handel do not always sit comfortably together, so it is all the more rewarding when they do. The focal points are two of Bach's cantatas, providing the declared intention of contrasting affliction with joy. *Mein Herze schwimmt im Blut* is an early work whose second aria, with its broad sweeping gestures, brings Handel to mind. Indeed, the chosen aria from Handel's *Il trionfo del Tempo e del Disinganno* (track 17) provides confirmation of this. For the centrally placed chorale, of consummate beauty, Raphaël Pichon has opted for a viola da gamba accompaniment, which Bach used at Cöthen, rather than the viola of the earlier Weimar performance.

> Hannes Rux's trumpet playing in the Bach is scintillating

The joyful *Jauchzet Gott* illustrates the other side of the coin, and Devieilhe brings warmth, radiance and a relaxed athleticism to this musical tour de force. Hannes Rux's trumpet playing is scintillating, and the violin partnership of Sophie Gent and Louis Créac'h in the concluding aria-chorale set the seal upon an exhilarating performance in which two arias from Handel's opera, *Giulio Cesare*, and short extracts from his *Brockes Passion* complete a thoughtful and beguiling tableau.

PERFORMANCE ★★★★★
RECORDING ★★★★★

Radiant warmth: Sabine Devieilhe is a sparkling presence

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Britten • Canteloube

Britten: Quatre Chansons Françaises; Les illuminations; **Canteloube:** Chants d'Auvergne
Mari Eriksmoen (soprano); Bergen Philharmonic/Edward Gardner
Chandos CHSA 5289 (CD/SACD) 74:15 mins

In Britten's *Les illuminations*, the generally bell-like accuracy of Norwegian soprano Mari Eriksmoen's singing is more than matched by the expressive truth of her interpretations. She is most beguiling when floating her voice weightlessly and with a serene *joie de vivre* in 'Antique', perfectly partnered by the lovely violin playing of the Bergen Philharmonic leader Melina Mandozzi. And the crisp precision with which Eriksmoen despatches her commentary on the grotesque 'Parade', rapid-fire low Gs included, is spellbinding.

So why not five stars? Notwithstanding the Bergen orchestra's excellent playing, Edward Gardner takes some liberties with Britten's meticulous score. In 'Interlude', as in his previous recording of *Les illuminations* (also on Chandos), he disregards Britten's repeated requests for *forte appassionato*, taking the piece at a listless tempo and starting each falling string phrase a wan *mezzo piano*. Gardner also introduces several new misreadings: in 'Fanfare', a premature upward glissando slightly spoils the effect of building to an exuberant boil; and the rather too perky tempo (certainly not *maestoso*) taken for 'Royauté' makes it seem fidgety rather than endearingly excited. Furthermore, Eriksmoen's tuning in 'Being Beauteous' is a microtone flat through the first dozen bars, which rather spoils the G major resolution.

Quatre Chansons, the 14-year-old Britten's ravishing settings of various French poets, offer a fair appetiser. But Canteloube's picture postcard-style Auvergne folksong settings, charming and amusing in small doses, pall after the first half dozen, though the 14 performed are well contrasted and engagingly sung. *Daniel Jaffé*

PERFORMANCE ★★★★
RECORDING ★★★★★

James MacMillan

The Culham Motets; A Special Appeal; Sing Joyfully to the Lord; Beatus Andreas; Behold, You Are Beautiful, My Love etc.
Cappella Nova/Alan Tavener
Linn Records CKD633 80:49 mins

In this fine recording, the fourth instalment of Capella Nova's acclaimed James MacMillan series, the Scottish-based choir once more brings a rare beauty and

depth of sound to MacMillan's radiant music.

At the album's heart are the five *Culham Motets*, composed in 2015 for the consecration of the Chapel of Christ the Redeemer at Culham Court. The motets range from the mystic profundity of 'Lift high the ancient portals' to the joyous proclamations of 'See the place where God lives'. Previously unrecorded, the cycle makes for a satisfying whole, and here receives a compelling and committed reading.

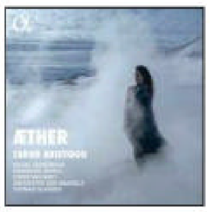
The rest of the album presents a range of shorter works, mostly composed over the last decade. Personal works like the luminous 'Behold, you are beautiful, my love' (2018), composed for MacMillan's son's wedding, sit alongside commissions such as *A Special Appeal* (2017), described by the composer as 'a mini sacred opera' to commemorate Óscar Romero, the Salvadoran prelate murdered in 1980. *St Anne's Mass* (1997/2011) is particularly welcome. MacMillan's most oft-sung work, this gentle piece has never previously been professionally recorded; Cappella Nova bring special warmth and colour to the folk-infused Sanctus.

The excellent sleeve notes are by soprano and choir co-founder Rebecca Tavener. Interwoven with playful snippets of conversation between Tavener and MacMillan, these enlightening notes further highlight the sense of shared musical understanding that unite composer and choir in this impressive disc. *Kate Wakeling*

PERFORMANCE ★★★★
RECORDING ★★★★

Æther

Works by Delibes, Handel, Poulenc, Varèse, Widmann et al
Sarah Aristidou (soprano), Daniel Barenboim (piano); Orchester des Wandels/Thomas Guggeis
Alpha Classics ALPHA781 65:29 mins



Can you capture the ineffable? Sarah Aristidou's remarkable debut disc *Æther* explores things within and beyond. She is duly shrouded in mist for the booklet pictures, but there is nothing the least bit wispy about either her formidable coloratura singing or the exceptional programming here. The concentrated intimacy of Varèse's elegiac 'Un grand sommeil noir' opens the disc, with Daniel Barenboim no less on piano. After the neutral colours of this musical expiration, the sumptuous Orchester des Wandels's appearance feels like a transcendent entry into a new domain.

NEDA NAVAEE

A most dazzling debut: soprano Sarah Aristidou makes an impact with *Æther*

Framed by two movements from Poulenc's Stabat Mater, the subsequent exploration of the inscrutable ranges from sublimely redemptive Handel to a commandingly stratospheric Ariel's Song from Adès's *The Tempest*. The progressions are provocative and insightful, links of mood and material balanced by apparent juxtapositions. For instance, a defiantly sassy 'bell song' from Delibes's *Lakmé* is followed by Stravinsky's free-flying *Song of the Nightingale*. Baroque guitarist Christian Rivet's arrangement of the Swedish folksong 'Nackens Polska' initially seems an esoteric, if charming choice. It reveals itself as the melodic source for Ambroise Thomas's utterly exquisite 'Le voila, je crois l'entendre' from *Hamlet*, hardly standard fare itself.

The premiere recording of Jörg Widmann's *Labyrinth V* is the wordless centrepiece. Written for Aristidou's unaccompanied voice, this compelling, occasionally disturbing tour de force in the tradition of Berberian's *Stripsody* takes in everything from maniacal laughter turning to sobs, musing sighs, gurgles, clicks, slaps and obsessive vocalisations. Like the disc as a whole, it is a solid triumph. *Christopher Dingle*

PERFORMANCE ★★★★★
RECORDING ★★★★

Maria & Maddalena

Oratorios by Bononcini, Caldara, A Draghi, Handel, Lulier, Perti and A Scarlatti
Francesca Aspromonte (soprano); I Barocchisti/Diego Fasolis
Pentatone PTC 5186 867 62:09 mins

This unusual programme interlaces extracts from Italian Baroque oratorios in order to contrast the voices and the vacillating emotions of the Virgin Mary and Mary Magdalene. Among several rarities and newly-edited works are a Christmas oratorio by the Roman composer Giovanni Lorenzo Lulier, which soprano Francesca Aspromonte and Swiss period-instrument ensemble I Barocchisti inject with fervent immediacy, and an aria by the music-loving Holy Roman Emperor Leopold I, realised with apt gravitas here. We're also treated to arias from two Passion oratorios by Giacomo Antonio Perti: in 'Del Nazareno non era in seno', Boris Begelman's graceful violin arabesques swirl like incense around the voice, while in 'Del campo il bel fiore' the players offset stark unison passages with lush full textures to thrilling effect.

Other highlights are Caldara's poignant aria 'Pompe inutili' – Aspromonte and cellist Mario Valli conversing in an exquisite dialogue – and Alessandro Scarlatti's beguiling 'Stesa a pie' del tronco amaro' whose imploring vocal line flows like tears over throbbing strings. Though it's a pity to carve these oratorios into bleeding chunks, the programme nonetheless manages to build a compelling discourse between the two Marys.

Aspromonte's voluptuous, velvety soprano and vivid diction capture the emotional and rhetorical tensions of works that veer from grief to joy; my one caveat is that her colour palette and dynamic shading lack a little variety. She's superbly partnered by I Barocchisti who, under Diego Fasolis, point up the affects that heighten these musical expressions of human and divine love. *Kate Bolton-Porciatti*

PERFORMANCE ★★★★★
RECORDING ★★★★★

Nostalgia

Bartók: Village Scenes; **Brahms:** Lieder; **Musorgsky:** The Nursery
Magdalena Kožená (mezzo-soprano), Yefim Bronfman (piano)
Pentatone PTC 5186 777 64:08 mins

'Nostalgia' seems a peculiar title for a recital that exists very much in the moment. There's not the slightest sentimentality in either the music in this programme or the way it is performed here. Bartók's scenes are earthy, folky, celebratory of their roots deep in Hungarian peasant life; Musorgsky's *The Nursery* is anything but rose-tinted in its view of childhood, the Russian composer as ever holding up a microscope to the lurid, on-the-brink colours of life. As for Brahms, he invites a feast of vocal and pianistic splendour – and gets it, too, in these larger-than-life interpretations by Magdalena Kožená and Yefim Bronfman.

Kožená's voice is a glory at the best of times, a coppery sunset of a tone that can send its glow across the whole sky. But if her voice is gigantic, one thing is bigger still, and it's Bronfman's pianism, which almost manages to overwhelm her at certain points in the Brahms and Musorgsky songs. His sound matches hers in richness and

Formidable talents: The Hermes Experiment always push boundaries

RAPHAEL NEAL

they seem to have a streamlined conceptual understanding, but sometimes one can't help wanting him to scale it back a bit.

In Bartók's 'Wedding' the pair create the impression of a teeming village hall, and Brahms songs like 'Meine liebe ist grün' and 'Von ewige Liebe' shine out like miniature operas. Yet generally this recording, which is enhanced by a good and quite resonant sound, is missing just one thing: the sense of intimacy that can be so beneficial in creating a totally satisfying Lieder recital. *Jessica Duchen*

PERFORMANCE ★★★★
RECORDING ★★★★

La nuit étoilée

Berlioz: Les Nuits d'été; Cléopatre – Scène lyrique; **A Holmès:** Ludus pro Patria – La Nuit et l'amour
Stéphanie d'Oustrac (mezzo-soprano); Orchestre Pasdeloup/ Wolfgang Doerner
Gramola 99247 56:21 mins

I sense that the engineers have struggled with the acoustic here, because the sound lacks definition to the point that I would dub it 'woolly'. It means, too, that Stéphanie d'Oustrac's diction, excellent on other discs of hers, is not as clear as it might be, nor are the orchestral bursts of sound in *Cléopâtre* as sharp and vigorous. Although d'Oustrac has an exceptional range, with a fine top B flat and an equally resonant one on the F flat two and a half octaves lower, on the emotive word 'linceul' (shroud), the voice is no longer quite as seductive as it was. Obviously this matters less in *Cléopâtre* than in *Nuits d'été*, where charm is required in 'Villanelle' and elsewhere.

The disc's three *raisons d'être* are strangely various: celebrations of the 160th anniversary of the *Concerts Pasdeloup*, of the three strong women involved in the music (Cleopatra, Augusta Holmès and d'Oustrac) and, as a rather poor third, of the idea of 'night', which appears tangentially in *Nuits d'été* and not at all in *Cléopâtre*. Holmès's *La Nuit et l'amour* is nothing special, a piece of pseudo-Massenet that runs out of steam around halfway and then finds it hard to escape from the tonic E flat major. The conductor doesn't help in *Nuits d'été* by ignoring many of Berlioz's *rallentando* markings, which affect the shaping of the songs. On the other hand, the composer's meanness with dynamic markings surely has to be supplemented, by agreement between singer and conductor. *Roger Nichols*

PERFORMANCE ★★★
RECORDING ★★★

Song

Works by Kerry Andrew, Helen Grime, Soosan Lolaver, C Schumann et al
The Hermes Experiment: Héloïse Werner (soprano), Oliver Pashley (clarinet), Anne Denholm (harp), Marianne Schofield (double bass)
Delphian DCD 34274 73:45 mins

The second album from this ground-breaking contemporary chamber group is beautifully produced, with lavish, informative liner notes. Through this recital, the ensemble argues for song – in all its forms – as a 'site of heightened emotion'. The repertoire includes the appealing opening, Olivia Chaney's 'Roman Holiday', and the fiercely rhythmic 'Draw the Line' by Ayanna Witter-Johnson. Helen Grime's 'Council Offices' acquires even greater pathos in this sensitive reorchestration, although Héloïse Werner's dispassionate approach is unexpected. Soosan Lolavar's 'Mâh Didam' bridges Iranian music and Renaissance counterpoint.

Jeremy Thurlow's three *Quiet Songs* are delicately shaded and tenderly performed. Kerry Andrews's *Fruit Songs* (plum, blackberry, cherry and apple), arranged by harpist Anne Denholm, make a delicious set, showcasing the group's percussive abilities, timbral virtuosity and expressive warmth. Emily Hall's setting of Toby Litt's 'Befalling' is a moving finish.

Familiar music re-emerges transformed. The surface of Werner's rendition of Strozzi's 'Tradimento!' is disrupted by rough interjections, while the spacious reorchestration of Clara Schumann's 'Liebst du um Schönheit' acquires almost Mahlerian pathos. The light-filled arrangements of Lili Boulanger's 'Reflets' and 'Attente' surpass even the originals.

Werner's unselfconscious, flexible voice is at ease throughout the stylistic range, albeit retaining a distinctively instrumental quality. The talk which introduces 'A Photograph' felt a little long, although it merges neatly into the song's opening.

These formidable chamber musicians range effortlessly through the centuries and around the globe, recognising no stylistic boundaries. Their mesmerising soundworld is supported by a glowing, open acoustic, dazzlingly pure intonation and seamless timbral interplay between voice and instruments. An immersive, thought provoking and sensual experience. *Natasha Loges*

PERFORMANCE ★★★★
RECORDING ★★★★★

Unreleased

Beethoven: Ah! Perfido; **Haydn:** Berenice, che fai?; **Mozart:** Non più, tutto ascoltai – Non temer, amato bene*; Ah, lo previdi… Ah, t'invola agl'occhi miei etc; **Mysliveček:** La clemenza di Tito – 'Se mai senti'
Cecilia Bartoli (mezzo-soprano), *Maxim Vengerov (violin); Basel Chamber Orchestra/Muhai Tang
Decca 485 2093 59:04 mins

This selection of (mostly) concert or insertion arias was recorded in 2013, though not previously released. Most are relatively well known, except for the item by the Czech-born Josef Mysliveček (1737-81), who enjoyed a successful career in Italy where for a time he was on close terms with the much younger Mozart. He was clearly influenced by him, as is evidenced by 'Se mai senti spirarti sul volto' from his *La clemenza di Tito* (1774) – a Metastasio libretto would later also be set by Mozart in altered form.

Some of Bartoli's best singing comes in this piece. Elsewhere there are passages where her characteristic commitment to textual expression becomes over-vehement; at worst, it sounds petulant. There are also points when her tone takes on a mottled hue.

Yet much of her more delicate singing combines beauty of tone with expressiveness. The slow section of Beethoven's 'Ah! Perfido' is lovely; then in the furious concluding section she loses control of pitch. Much of the disc, regrettably, continues this contradictory approach.

Violinist Maxim Vengerov, however, goes for unblemished lyricism in his two obbligatos – 'Non temer, amato bene' from *Idomeneo*, 'L'amerò, sarò costante' from *Il re pastore* – while the orchestral accompaniments are beautifully managed under Muhai Tang. *George Hall*

PERFORMANCE ★★★
RECORDING ★★★★

CHAMBER CHOICE

Pitch-perfect Mendelssohn from the Doric Quartet

Martin Cotton **says this genial young ensemble is a safe set of hands for the composer's chamber works**

Mendelssohn maturity: Doric String Quartet give an assured performance

GEORGE GARNIER

Mendelssohn

String Quartets, Vol. 2: No. 2 in A minor, Op. 13; No. 3 in D, Op. 44/1; No. 4 in E minor, Op. 44/2
Doric String Quartet
Chandos CHAN 20257-2 89:22 mins (2 discs)

The works which bookend Mendelssohn's numbered quartets are each related to a death – the A minor (the first he wrote, notwithstanding its being assigned 'No. 2' on publication) obliquely to Beethoven's, and the F minor more directly to that of his sister Fanny. There's a sense of violent loss in their first movements, and the Doric convey that even more effectively in the earlier quartet than they did in the F minor four years ago. The way the music erupts after the warmth of the major-key introduction comes with an electric charge, and tension is maintained with a searing sense of momentum. At 18, Mendelssohn had the experimental confidence of youth, and the three remaining movements all take unexpected turns of direction in pacing and melodic development, projected here with ease and maturity.

> The moods are captured with precision and a wealth of detail

Composed ten years later, the Op. 44 quartets display a more conservative cast of mind, with less formal experimentation, but no lack of melodic invention and proliferation. Both have long first movements – genial in the D major, more plangent and yearning in the E minor – and it's a measure of the performances that they capture these moods with precision and a wealth of detail in the colouring and phrasing of individual lines. This never detracts from the unity of purpose in the playing; and the charm of the second movements – a minuet and a fleet scherzo respectively – plays off against the song-without-words feel of the subsequent andantes and the energy of the final prestos. All in splendid Chandos sound: a winner.

PERFORMANCE ★★★★★
RECORDING ★★★★★

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Bantock • Bax • HB Gardiner

Bax: String Quartet in E; **Bantock:** In a Chinese Mirror; **ET Davies:** Eos Lais (The Nightingale); **JD Davis:** Summer's Eve at Cookham Lock – Idyll, Op. 50; **HB Gardiner:** String Quartet in B flat
Tippett Quartet
Dutton Epoch CDLX7389 (CD/SACD) 79:48 mins

Another joyous unearthing of British music from the Tippett Quartet. The most substantial work –at least, in terms of length – is Arnold Bax's String Quartet in E, written when he was 20, an early fruit of his obsession with Ireland. Its middle movement, the only track that isn't a premiere recording, was orchestrated to make his first tone poem, *Cathleen-Ni-Houlihan*. Of its outer movements the first is especially interesting: an exuberant, 14-minute piece that begins in Irish folk style in the vein of Dvořák's *American* Quartet and morphs within five minutes into something like Schoenberg's *Verklärte Nacht*, premiered only the year before. You occasionally get the feeling that Bax was composing at the piano rather than with the sound of strings in his head – some of the wilder harmonic hurtlings in the finale sound a little chaotic, for all the Tippett Quartet's skilful advocacy. But the work as a whole is a worthwhile discovery.

There's more to enjoy in the smaller-scale pieces. Granville Bantock's *In a Chinese Mirror* is a reworking of four songs with a depth of feeling that goes beyond travel-brochure chinoiserie. Henry Balfour Gardiner's one-movement Quartet in B flat major is a stylistic collision of its time (1905), as if the 'Teddy Bears' Picnic' had been laid out on the set of *Tristan und Isolde*.

The most idiomatic string writing comes in the pieces by the least-known composers: in the soulful *Summer's Eve at Cookham Lock* by the Birmingham composer John David Davis, and in Evan Thomas Davies's hymn-like arrangement of the Welsh folk song 'Eos Lais'. *Erica Jeal*

PERFORMANCE ★★★★
RECORDING ★★★★

Beethoven

Violin Sonatas, Op. 30 Nos 1-3

Christian Tetzlaff (violin), Lars Vogt (piano)

Ondine ODE 1392-2 70:52 mins

The most famous of these three sonatas is the turbulent and grandly conceived middle one, in Beethoven's characteristically dramatic key of C minor. But if the outer works of the set are less ambitious in scope, they are no less strikingly individual. The A major Sonata, Op. 30 No. 1 originally had a finale in whirlwind tarantella rhythm, but Beethoven eventually transferred it to the hastily composed *Kreutzer* Sonata, Op. 47, and in its place wrote a set of variations on a gentle theme more in keeping with the sonata's intimate and lyrical nature; while Op. 30 No. 3 constantly surprises with the wit of its invention.

Christian Tetzlaff and Lars Vogt make a formidable team: technically right at the top of their game (Tetzlaff's bow control is phenomenal), and yet at the same time always managing to convey the notion of taking risks. Their tempos tend to be on the quick side – perhaps too much so in the A major Sonata's concluding variations, which could do with a touch more grace and elegance; and in the opening movement of the C minor work, which, for all its *Allegro con brio* marking, really ought to give the impression of four beats to the bar, rather than two. But no one wants their Beethoven to sound comfortable, and the bold originality of these pieces, which stand on the cusp of his innovative middle period style (the *Eroica* Symphony was to come in the following year) is everywhere in evidence. *Misha Donat*

PERFORMANCE ★★★★
RECORDING ★★★★★

Timothy Jones

Four Trumpet Sonatas after Mozart

Jonathan Freeman-Attwood (trumpet), Anna Szałucka (piano)

Linn Records CKD668 75:31 mins

This intriguing collaboration between acclaimed trumpeter Jonathan Freeman-Attwood and Mozart scholar Timothy Jones is a bold venture indeed. The project is grounded in Mozart's chequered relationship with the trumpet: according to one contemporary account, Mozart was 'terrified' of its 'blaring sound' as a child. Freeman-Attwood and Jones thus offer a 'belated apology to the composer on behalf of all trumpet players' by envisaging what might have happened had the trumpet developed into a lyrical and chromatic solo instrument in the 1770s and '80s.

The result is a series of four sonatas 'after Mozart' created by Jones in collaboration with Freeman-Attwood which draw closely on Mozart's stylistic idioms while also freely borrowing and adapting passages from extant scores. Sonata No. 2 in B flat is a transcription of the Piano Sonata in D major K284, augmented with 'the accompaniment of' a trumpet, while Sonata No. 4 in F major is modelled more loosely on several of Mozart's late violin sonatas. This is not the first time Freeman-Attwood has sought to inhabit the brain of a canonic composer: his 'newly-imagined Strauss trumpet sonata' was successfully released with Linn last year. And the results of this latest musical experiment are similarly winning. Richly lyrical and bright as starlight, Jonathan Freeman-Attwood's outstanding playing is the ideal advocate for a 'Mozart trumpet sonata' and he is accompanied with flair by Anna Szałucka. Indeed, there is something so exuberant about the whole enterprise – both in the recording itself and the enjoyably playful sleeve notes – that any misgivings I had soon dissolved. *Kate Wakeling*

PERFORMANCE ★★★★
RECORDING ★★★★

Weinberg

Piano Trio; Sonata for 2 Violins; 2 Songs Without Words; Sonatensatz II – Largo

Linus Roth, Janusz Wawrowski (violin), Danjulo Ishizaka (cello), José Gallardo (piano)

Evil Penguin EPRC0044 62:50 mins

Violinist Linus Roth has been a particularly committed champion of Weinberg's music for some years, having recorded all of his sonatas for solo violin and for violin and piano, as well as the Violin Concerto, for Challenge Classics. Here he augments this comprehensive survey of Weinberg's output for the instrument with the febrile Sonata for two violins, a worthy companion piece to the much more famous work for the same combination by Prokofiev, the gently melodic almost Mendelssohnian set of *Songs without Words*, composed in the 1940s, and the rather bleak and previously unrecorded *Sonatensatz*.

But the main work is undoubtedly the Piano Trio. It was the first music by Weinberg which Roth got to know way back in 2010, and its emotional power and compelling musical argument were largely responsible for stimulating his further curiosity about the then grievously neglected composer. Twelve years later, however, the reputation of the Piano Trio has grown quite astonishingly with at least ten alternative recordings.

The present performance must surely rank amongst the finest. Roth and his regular duo partner José Gallardo, together with the exceptionally eloquent cellist Danjulo Ishizaka, have an instinctive feel for the idiom and know exactly when to ratchet up the tension, as in the blistering rhythmic energy of the 'Toccata' and pulsating fugal writing of the 'Finale', and when to provide calm reflection, as in the closing passage of the 'Praeludium and Aria' and the recitative passages of the 'Poem'. A word of praise, too, for the recording which has a staggering immediacy that fully matches the urgency of Weinberg's writing in the Trio. *Erik Levi*

PERFORMANCE ★★★★★
RECORDING ★★★★★

12 3 11

Debussy: Première rhapsodie; **Fenton:** The Snow Leopard; **Fitkin:** Cusp for Solo Clarinet; **Howells:** Clarinet Sonata; **Poulenc:** Sonata for Two Clarinets; **Reich:** New York Counterpoint (version for amplified clarinet and tape); **Roderick Williams:** Red Herring Blues

Barnaby Robson (clarinet), Rebecca Chamber (viola), Fiona Harris, Simon Chamberlain (piano)

Orchid Classics ORC100184 67:51 mins

There are oddities about this recording. One is the title, *12 3 11*, a reference to the number of players needed for its various pieces. Another is the eyebrow-raising juxtaposition of works by Steve Reich and Herbert Howells, perhaps the first time this has happened in a chamber music recital.

Reich's *New York Counterpoint* opens the programme, with Barnaby Robson playing all 11 clarinets Reich used to map the pulsing, veering cityscape of mid-'80s Manhattan. Compared to Evan Ziporyn's reference 1996 recording (Nonesuch Records), Robson favours warmer tone and a more forwardly balanced sound picture. This somewhat smoothes out the metallic edges Ziporyn finds in the music, and dilutes its heady mix of excitement and alienation.

After Reich, Howells's Clarinet Sonata seems relatively conservative, but Robson throws a curve-ball by performing an early version of the piece, made before Howells revised it. The opening

BACKGROUND TO… Mendelssohn's *String Quartet No. 2 in A minor*

Inspired somewhat by love and death, the String Quartet No. 2 was written in 1827 when Mendelssohn was just 18 years old. He already had a number of fine chamber works under his belt and this very mature work shows just how far he had come. Beethoven's death just months before played its part in the work's genesis, not to mention an affair of the heart which also inspired his song, 'Frage'. There is evidence of that song throughout this quartet, not to mention echoes of Beethoven's late quartets, which apparently captivated Mendelssohn.

Off the beaten track: Chouchane Siranossian explores Bach's world

GETTY, NIKOLAJ LUND

movement's oscillations between introversion and animation are commandingly articulated, and the more truculent second movement reveals a rhythmically tight, empathic partnership between Robson and pianist Fiona Harris.

Shorter pieces complete the balance of the programme. In Poulenc's Sonata for Two Clarinets Robson cheekily plays both parts himself, in a taut, burbling performance. His nuanced account of Debussy's *Première rhapsodie* brings dreaminess, delicacy and fleet-fingered virtuosity, while Roderick Williams's encore-style *Red Herring Blues* has Robson and pianist Harris trading licks in a fast and furious fashion. By no means a conventionally programmed recital, but one that consistently piques the listener's attention. *Terry Blain*

PERFORMANCE ★★★★
RECORDING ★★★★

Bach before Bach

JS Bach: Violin Sonata in G, BWV 1021; Violin Sonata in E minor, BWV 1023; Fugue in G minor for violin and basso continuo, BWV 1026 etc. **C Farina:** Sonata quinta detta la farina; **AA Schmelzer:** Victori der Christen; **JG Walther:** Sonata No. 6 – Passagagli; **Westhoff:** Imitazione delle campane

Chouchane Siranossian (violin), Leonardo García Alarcón (harpsichord), Balázs Máté (cello)

Alpha Classics ALPHA 758 61:33 mins

JS Bach's music emerged within a rich tapestry of influences from France, Italy and, of course, Germany (particularly his native Thuringia and north Germany). We've tended, however, to forget all that and worship Bach as a standalone musical deity. Cue this wonderful recital headed up by violinist Chouchane Siranossian that brings us Bach before 'Bach' (or should that be 'BACH'), and places his early music at various pin drops along a fascinating journey through his predecessors and contemporaries.

Immediately striking is the incredible Passacaglia by Johann Gottfried Walther whose life almost exactly overlapped with Bach's. It's daring, explosive, virtuosic stuff, that might well have caused JS to spill his coffee. Similarly wild is the pre-Bach Johann Paul Von Westhoff's *Imitazione delle campane*, a blistering, Vivaldian arpeggiated riff that veers into strange harmonic lands. And while built on traditional foundations, Andreas Anton Schmelzer's deliciously theatrical *Victori der Christen* is presented in a similarly outlandish way, thanks to the unbridled energy and thrilling musicianship of these brilliant players. *Oliver Condy*

PERFORMANCE ★★★★★
RECORDING ★★★★★

Celebrating Women!

String Trios by Hyde, Smith, Smyth, Wegener

The Hague String Trio

Cobra COBRA0083 59:50 mins

Happily, the number of works by living women composers is increasing, but, as The Hague String Trio demonstrates with this all-female programme, there are still plenty of historic gems to champion, too. Ethel Smyth is the best-known composer here, thanks to a recent surge in popularity (Glyndebourne opens its 2022 season with her opera *The Wreckers*) that has brought several premiere recordings. Her String Trio – like the other works in this collection – receives its first outing here and again shows Smyth to be capable of powerful, idiomatic writing. The Hague String Trio prises open the lengthy *Allegro* to reveal the richness of the interior movements, and, if not quite joy, satisfaction in the dance-like finale.

Emmy Frensel Wegener's five-movement Suite hints at French modernism but, like the other two composers featured, stays rooted in Romanticism. The Hague String Trio gives us a jolly *Scherzo* and a lingering *Andante* in this divertimento-style piece. *Claire Jackson*

PERFORMANCE ★★★
RECORDING ★★★★

Muse

Barber: Cello Sonata; There's Nae Lark; A Slumber Song of the Madonna; With rue my heart is laden; Sure on this shining night; **Rachmaninov:** It cannot be!; How fair this spot; The Muse; Cello Sonata

Sheku Kanneh-Mason (cello), Isata Kanneh-Mason (piano)

Decca 485 1630 67:07 mins

Barber's Cello Sonata may be well represented on disc, but somewhat surprisingly doesn't feature all that much in recitals. However, that might be about to change thanks to the persuasive advocacy of Sheku and Isata Kanneh-Mason. This hugely talented duo has really taken to the work in a big way and they have performed it many times in recent years. Their strong identification with the Sonata is immediately evident in this recording. They bring a remarkable unanimity of ensemble to the dialogue and make light work of some rhythmically complex passages. But they also demonstrate a convincing mastery of the Sonata's continually fluctuating tempos and the wide gamut of emotions that encompass its three movements.

The Kanneh-Masons supplement the Sonata with sensitive transcriptions for cello and piano of four of Barber's songs. It's a lovely idea in principle, but in practice, the generally contemplative nature of the writing and the slow tempos of each song begins to sound monotonous if listened to as a complete sequence. A similar problem arises with the three slow Rachmaninov song transcriptions that follow, though I should add that the performance of the more extended 'Muse' is quite exquisite.

I was less convinced by their Rachmaninov Sonata. On the plus side, I applaud their generally straightforward approach to the music and their reluctance to succumb to too much self-indulgence in shaping the composer's gorgeous melodies. But elsewhere, the performance doesn't always engage me partly because Sheku Kanneh-Mason's tonal palette seems more limited and requires a greater subtlety of nuance in certain passages. *Erik Levi*

PERFORMANCE ★★★★
RECORDING ★★★★

Instrumental

INSTRUMENTAL CHOICE

Liszt with high drama and a deep soul

Natasha Loges **is wowed by pianist Saskia Giorgini's skill and sensitivity**

Liszt

Harmonies poétiques et religieuses
Saskia Giorgini (piano)
Pentatone PTC 5186 296 84:49 mins

Liszt's *Harmonies poétiques et religieuses* are less familiar – and more appealing – than his *Années de pèlerinage*. Giorgini's affinity with this reflective music is evident from the outset. Formidable technical ability is matched by the architectural sense, harmonic sensibility and coloristic range this sprawling music demands. Her shaping of climaxes demonstrates complete control of pace and dynamics, on a Bösendorfer which never sounds brash.

> Giorgini's affinity with this reflective music is evident

Particularly persuasive is the lengthy 'Bénédiction de Dieu dans la solitude', with its exquisite shimmering accompaniments and a glorious, soaring melody. The wordless prayer of the 'Pater Noster' feels heartfelt and sincere. The famous 'Funerailles' receives a powerful reading at an intelligent (not funereal) pace, with effortless handling of the unrelenting left-hand octave passages.

Giorgini makes a good case for the gloomy opening stretches of the 'Pensées des Morts', and less inspired passages in the 'Hymne de l'enfant a son reveil', the 'Andante Lagrimoso' and the closing 'Cantique d'amour'. Her ability to cut through Liszt's dense textures is exemplified in the roiling, surging 'Miserere d'apres Palestrina'. Some rhetorical, declamatory passages really need live performance to pull off their theatricality, but Giorgini enlivens them with both high drama and thoughtful interiority.

This fine recording demands that the listener draw the curtains on a wintry evening, pour a glass of something delicious and complex, and let Giorgini guide us across Liszt's expansive spiritual landscapes.

PERFORMANCE ★★★★★
RECORDING ★★★★★

Poetic insights: Saskia Giorgini's is a powerful reading

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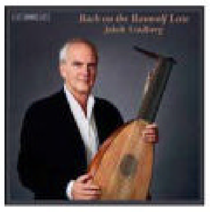
JS Bach

Bach on the Rauwolf Lute: Cello Suite No. 1; Suite in E, BWV 1006a; Violin Sonata in G minor, BWV 1001; Chaconne, BWV 1004; Violin Sonata No. 3 in C, BWV 1005 – excerpts etc.
Jakob Lindberg (lute)
BIS BIS-2552 (CD/SACD) 87:57 mins



As well as the radiant 'lute suite' BWV 1006a (more familiar in the version for solo violin), this spellbinding recording features Jakob Lindberg's own arrangements of works written for bowed strings. The Suite BWV 1007, originally for solo cello, is here transposed from G to C major and played so gracefully on the lute that it seems as if it were born on the instrument. The Suite's all-pervasive dance rhythms sound wispy and supple, and the lacy embellishments of the Sarabande are particularly effective on the lute's feathery strings.

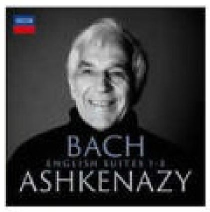
Also ravishing in their intimate new guise are sundry works originally for solo violin: the G minor Sonata BWV 1001, the monumental Chaconne from the D minor Partita and two movements from the C major Sonata BWV 1005. While the violin versions highlight Bach's cantabile lines, the lute transcriptions reveal – with limpid clarity – textures and harmonies: chords and arpeggiations are more easily realised on the lute than on the violin, and therefore the sound has greater equilibrium.

Lindberg's playing is effortless and intuitive throughout; he coaxes an exquisite range of shades from the Rauwolf lute – a precious velvet-toned instrument that has been played since Bach's own lifetime and beyond. In sum, it's a treasurable disc.
Kate Bolton-Porciatti

PERFORMANCE ★★★★★
RECORDING ★★★★★

JS Bach

English Suites Nos 1-3
Vladimir Ashkenazy (piano)
Decca 485 2088 92:35 mins (2 discs)



As Jeremy Hayes observes in his liner note, Vladimir Ashkenazy left a 39-year gap between his first Bach recording – of the D minor Concerto – and his second, a celebrated recording of the *48*. This gap, he told Hayes, was because he simply didn't feel ready to approach Bach's music 'correctly'. This account of the first three *English Suites* rounds off a series of recordings he has made including the Partitas, the *Italian Concerto* and the *French Suites*, and it does so with Ashkenazy's customary authority.

The style of Bach's earliest keyboard suite is an amalgam of the

refined French and virtuoso Italian styles, and its title is a mystery; the only clue is a note by a relative or pupil of Bach, 'Fait pour les Anglois'.

Taking off into the heavens with a notably muscular account of the opening Prelude, Ashkenazy gives a performance with nothing mannered in its unvarnished expressiveness; every note in every piece of ornamentation comes over with lapidary clarity. The dances have a fleet brilliance, and the emotion of the Sarabandes is reined in with no hint of heart-on-sleeve. The contrast between the Gavotte and Musette in the third suite is deftly done; the crazy inversion of that suite's Gigue is bracingly exuberant.

By juxtaposing Ashkenazy's 1965 recording of the D minor concerto, this recording allows a then-and-now comparison, and the good news is that his playing has kept all its directness, poise and wit. As he turns the *Adagio* into a long and unbroken line of rapt beauty, you sense his thrilled delight in this exploration of something which feels like *terra incognita*. *Michael Church*

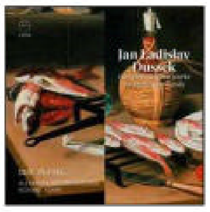
PERFORMANCE ★★★★★
RECORDING ★★★★

Dussek

Works for Piano Four Hands

Duo Pleyel

Linn Records CKD642 80:02 mins



The Czech composer and piano soloist, Jan Ladislav Dussek, was something of a rock star where audiences in late-18th and-early- 19th-century Europe were concerned. Admired for his good looks and dazzling virtuosity, at the height of his fame he drew huge crowds to concerts and was friend to many of the finest musicians of the day; even the great Haydn spoke enthusiastically of his 'remarkable talents'.

These 'talents' are abundantly evident in his surviving music for four hands presented here. Dussek continually disarms the listener by contrasting the predictable with the audacious: the Grand Overture in C sets the scene with a portentous *Largo* which gives way to a *Molto Allegro* replete with some remarkably adventurous modulation. At the other end of the collection, the C major Duo is not quite as striking, but certainly worthy of attention. Dussek was a fine contrapuntist and the three fugues, with their fascinating harmonic palette certainly reward repeated listing, although perhaps the D major fugue with its slightly saucy opening subject and radiant conclusion, takes the palm. Richard Egarr and Alexandra Nepomnyashchaya are superb advocates blending virtuosity and understated elegance in performances that truly inhabit the music. For some ears the 1848 Pleyel on which they play may be an acquired taste, but the more one listens, the richer the contrasts between bass and treble, heard most effectively in the complex textures of fugues, energise these captivating works. Excellently recorded, this rewarding issue greatly enriches our understanding of the pre-Romantic piano repertoire. *Jan Smaczny*

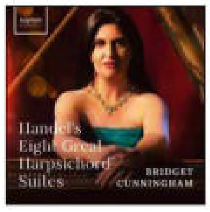
PERFORMANCE ★★★★★
RECORDING ★★★★★

Handel

Harpsichord Suites Nos 1-8; plus arrangements of Italian opera overtures and arias

Bridget Cunningham (harpsichord)

Signum Classics SIGCD 679
154:10 mins (2 discs)



The eight Suites contained here were printed in 1720. The release further includes the splendid Chaconne in G major, published in 1733, and a handful of harpsichord arrangements by the composer of music from four of his operas. Even though we have publication dates for the music, it is not possible to place with certainty their period of composition. Much of it may belong to Handel's Hamburg years between 1704-05. What is certain is that these pieces are inventive and full of vitality. In short, they are unashamedly intended to please the senses and, in the hands of stylistically informed players they never fail to do so. Bridget Cunningham is just such a player.

Broadly speaking, the Suites follow the conventional French dance suite pattern, but with diverting irregularities such as Italianate *allegros*, two sets of variations, an ouverture and a passacaille. Seasoned Handelians will occasionally find pieces familiar to them in other contexts. Sometimes the preludes and allemandes bring François Couperin to mind, while the opening phrase of the Gigue of the E minor Suite bears affinity with the concluding movement of Bach's Fifth *Brandenburg Concerto*.

Cunningham's programme is crowned by the celebrated Air and Variations, *The Harmonious Blacksmith* – I cannot erase from my mind Wanda Landowska's stentorian initial note in her historic recording – and the Chaconne in G major with its 21 variations, where I enjoyed her quietly spoken registration for the minor key variations. Her feeling for dance rhythms is infectious and her ability to entertain unassailable. *Nicholas Anderson*

PERFORMANCE ★★★★★
RECORDING ★★★★

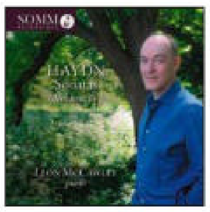
Virtuoso elegance: Duo Pleyel fly the flag for Dussek

Haydn

Piano Sonatas, Vol. 4: Nos 1, 30, 35, 48, 49 & 51

Leon McCawley (piano)

SOMM Recordings SOMMCD 0643
78:08 mins



This latest release in Leon McCawley's highly praised Haydn sonatas series centres on three of the diversely inventive set of six he published in 1780. The opening movement of No. 48 may be familiar as a learning piece in its C major frolics, yet the odd sequence of starkly rhetorical opening movement, frisky alternating-variation 'Scherzando' and wan little concluding Minuet of No. 49 in C sharp minor comprises an expressive challenge, while the flying scale-flurries of the opening movement of No. 51 in E flat demand high-level dexterity.

McCawley intersperses three earlier sonatas of which even the tiny divertimento-like No. 1 in G has its Haydn-esque asymmetries, while No. 30 in D major, dating from 1767, is already on a large scale with an unusual exploration of the lower range of the keyboard in its slow movement, and the dashing rondo finale of No. 35 in A flat from 1773 gets more eccentric as it goes on. McCawley's choices of tempos are unfailingly convincing, his articulation is lucid, crisp and full of contained vitality and he finds a touching pathos in such minor key movements as the C minor Siciliana of No. 51. This is playing that makes maximal musical sense of Haydn's notation unalloyed by exaggeration or mannerism. *Bayan Northcott*

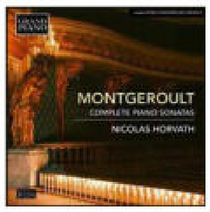
PERFORMANCE ★★★★
RECORDING ★★★★

Montgeroult

Piano Sonatas

Nicolas Horvath (piano)

Grand Piano GP885-86
156:41 mins (2 discs)



The written and recorded history of the piano sonata has focused on male exponents, but that is not the whole story. Women wrote sonatas too. One who made

MARIA FRODL, MARCO BORGGREVE

an important contribution to the genre was Hélène de Montgeroult (1764-1836), a French composer and pianist whose nine piano sonatas are brought together for the first time in this new two-disc set from pianist Nicolas Horvath. Several are premiere recordings.

So far, so promising. The sonatas fall into three groups, giving the chronological programme a natural shape. The first set was published in 1795, in the wake of the French Revolution, during which the aristocratic Montgeroult had found herself playing to save her life – quite literally. It's said she escaped the guillotine after she improvised variations on *La Marseillaise*, convincing a tribunal to spare her from death. Appointed as the first female professor at the Paris Conservatoire, her Op. 1 then came out, featuring three two-movement sonatas full of spirit and elan. Five years later, a second set followed, firmly in the Classical style.

Horvath plays a modern Steinway, but, mindful of the fortepiano on which Montgeroult herself would have played, performs these works with a light, highly articulated sound. It's effective enough, but there's something missing. Montgeroult was renowned for her cantabile playing; the artist Elisabeth Vigée-Le Brun, who once painted the pianist-composer, noted that 'she made the keys speak'. Here, the music too often neither speaks nor sings. It's the last three sonatas of 1811 – reaching out into the Romantic era, eloquently performed here by Horvath – which come off best. *Rebecca Franks*

PERFORMANCE ★★★
RECORDING ★★★★

Grenzgänge
– Crossing Borders

Works by JS Bach, Ligeti, Frescobaldi, Pachelbel and Pärt
Alexandra Sostmann (piano)
Prospero PROSP0034 69:24 mins

The ultimate destination of Sostmann's far-flung *Grenzgänge* (frontier crossings) is the Chaconne from Bach's Solo Violin Partita in D minor Partita. Not in Busoni's blockbuster of a piano transcription, but rather in Brahms's altogether more literal arrangement that seeks to build in the requisite element of virtuosity by restricting the performer to left hand alone. It's avowedly more restrained, and Sostmann plays it with a deliberately thoughtful, unshowy approach that casts a cool and forensic eye over Bach's imposing tri-partite edifice. What's gained in terms of translucent clarity is, however, at the cost of an enlivening intensity. Yet her measured calm perfectly suits Arvo Pärt's *Arinushka Variations*, each note held exquisitely in perfect equilibrium.

Sostmann isn't a pianist defined by restraint, however. She opens with a magisterially contoured, full-blooded account of Respighi's no-holds-barred respray of Frescobaldi. And Frescobaldi's shadow lengthens across the disc as she brings a romantic velvety precision to his pupil Froberger's D minor Ricercar, and pensively caresses the hushed, inscrutable doggedness of Ligeti's 'Omaggio a Frescobaldi', the final movement of his *Musica Ricercata*. Predominantly, Sostmann's imaginatively-curated, 'border crossings' are about variation form across the ages – Pachelbel's Ciacona in F minor crafted with a compelling sense of direction and momentum – but she allows herself the odd detour: Bach transcribed, is also revealed as a transcriber in the plangent little *Adagio* from Marcello's D minor Oboe Concerto. All told, a disc crafted with illuminating curiosity and supple, sleek pianism. *Paul Riley*

PERFORMANCE ★★★★
RECORDING ★★★★

London Nights

Bax: Piano Sonata No. 1;
Bridge: Three Sketches for Piano;
Britten: Holiday Diary;
Ireland: Ballade of London Nights;
Tippett: Piano Sonata No. 1
Franziska Lee (piano)
Capriccio C3010 75:49 mins

Having focused her attention on early 20th-century French composers for her debut Capriccio recording, Franziska Lee looks across the channel for this British programme of works from a similar era. The conductor Edward Gardner has described Michael Tippett's music as 'exasperating to bring to performance – it is impractically written, often on the edge of possibility'. Although Tippett's Sonata No. 1 was composed during the early part of his career (and revised in 1942), it foreshadows the later abstraction heard in works such as *The Midsummer Marriage* (the mid-part of the *Allegro*, for instance). Franziska Lee's sharply focused *Presto* is poised and pointillistic; the 'Rondo' allows further space for her to demonstrate virtuosity.

I must take issue with the recording title: with the exception of Ireland's slender *Ballade of London Nights*, most of the composers and featured works have deeper connections with other parts of the country. Although Britten was working in London (something he avoided in later life) around the time of *Holiday Diary*, as the movement titles suggest, this is not a city evocation. The dreamy, cresting 'Sailing' and *pianissimo* 'Night' have scene-setting qualities of Schubert. Lee's dynamic variations are supremely sensitive – so much that I had to adjust the volume.

Bax's single-movement sonata eschews traditional Italian terms for the English direction 'not too fast and very decisive in rhythm'. Lee is surefooted along Bax's sometimes meandering trails, with carefully delineated voicing. *Claire Jackson*

PERFORMANCE ★★★★
RECORDING ★★★★

The Proust Album

Hahn: Piano Concerto*; Premiere valses – Ninette; Nocturne – Sonate de vinteuil; **plus works by Chaminade, Debussy, Fauré, Franck, Gluck, R Strauss, Wagner and Ysaÿe**
Shani Diluka (piano); *Orchestre de Chambre de Paris/Hervé Niquet
Warner Classics 9029667625 86:56 mins

The centenary of Proust's death in 2022 will probably and rightly spark widespread tribute. This album is doubtless inspired by the best intentions. In choosing relevant music, the pianist Shani Diluka has responded to the names of composers mentioned by Proust, whether in his life or in his great novel. But really names alone are not enough. To reduce Wagner to a 90-second piano piece is disappointing when we might have an excerpt, even with voice and piano, from Act III of *Tristan*, which disturbed Proust by its 'Vulcanic joy'. Likewise Fauré's influence could be better explained through one song from *La bonne Chanson*, which Proust adored, protesting 'the songs I don't like are the early ones'.

As for the absence of any of Hahn's mélodies, this is quite inexplicable. Instead we have his Piano Concerto, premiered by Magda Tagliaferro in 1931 with Hahn conducting – some nine years after Proust's death. It's also some way from being his best music, with its tiresome insistence on the opening four-note motif; also unhelpful is Diluka's over-generous pedalling, compared with Tagliaferro's largely unpedalled *jeu perlé* in her 1937 recording. Another problem is the overall *moderato* effect of tracks 4-17, which come to border on the soporific. Finally, Diluka is one of those pianists who prefer their own dynamics to the composer's; and bar 12 of *L'Isle joyeuse*, lacking the low A, should have been retaken. *Roger Nichols*

PERFORMANCE ★★
RECORDING ★★★

GETTY

BACKGROUND TO…
Britten's *Holiday Diary*

Britten was still a student at the Royal College of Music in London when he started making a name for himself, most particularly for his choral variations *A Boy Was Born*. He was also developing as a promising pianist under the sympathetic tuition of Arthur Benjamin, and wrote a number of suites for that instrument including in 1934, when he was yet to reach his 21st birthday, his *Holiday Diary*. A set of four deft character pieces – 'Early Morning Bathe', 'Sailing', 'Fun-Fair' and 'Night' – they show the young composer's playful engagement with music by Bartók, Stravinsky and his own teacher.

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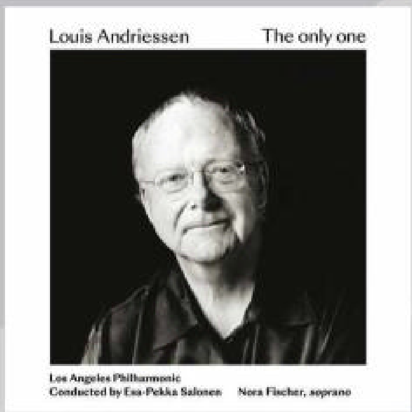

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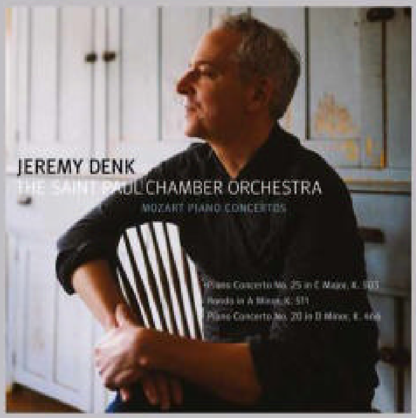

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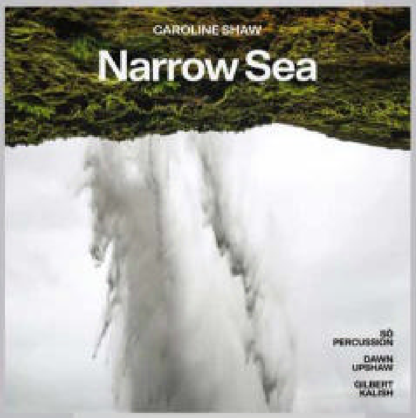

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DAWN UPSHAW, GILBERT KALISH &
SŌ PERCUSSION

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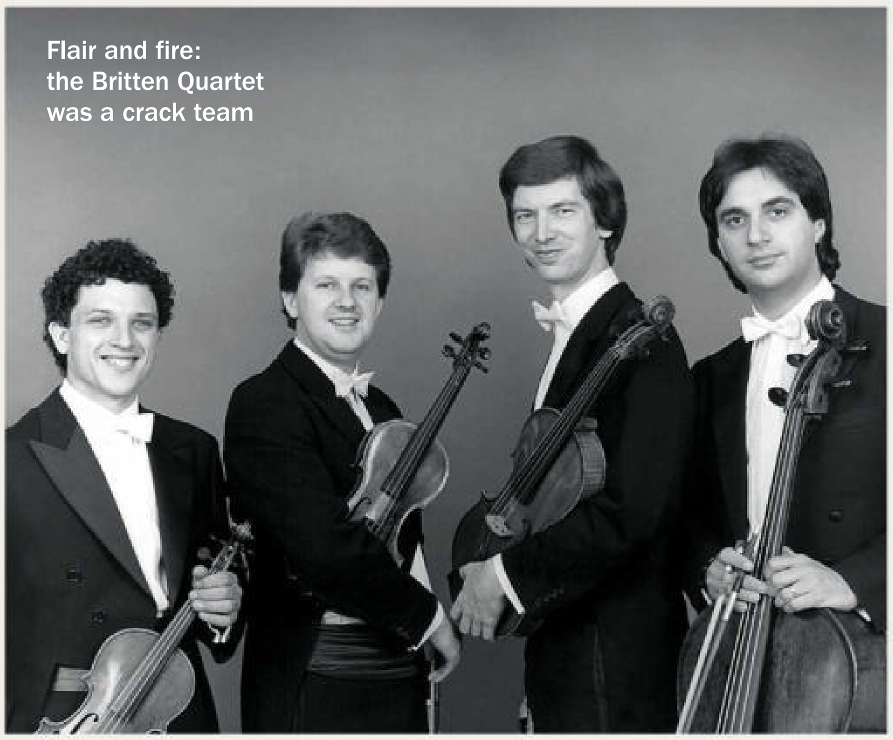
Unbeatable Britten

There is still so much to admire in this stunning set of chamber works from the Britten Quartet



Flair and fire: the Britten Quartet was a crack team

Britten

String Quartet No. 1 in D major, Op. 25; String Quartet No. 3, Op. 94; Simple Symphony, Op. 4
Britten Quartet
Alto ALC1441 (1989) 77:00 mins

The Britten Quartet was a musical force of nature, whose members (Andrew Shulman, Keith Pascoe, Peter Manning and Peter Lale) were all distinguished orchestral section leaders. During its ten years of existence (from the mid-1980s-90s), this crack ensemble produced a series of outstanding recordings for Collins Classics, Hyperion and EMI that won universal praise. And little wonder. They produced an expansive, rounded sonority that created the impression that more than four players were involved, and tantalisingly combined soloistic flair with flawless tonal integration.

Britten's quartets are easy to admire, but are often played as though they are fascinating *objets d'art* rather than flesh-and-blood emotional utterances. This is where the Britten Quartet comes into its own with an unbeatable combination of sonic radiance and searing interpretative flair.

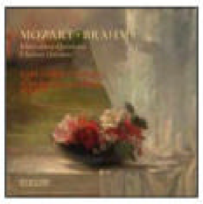
Stunningly recorded in the Snape Maltings, the youthful exuberance and playful reappropriations of the *Simple Symphony* comes leaping off the page. No less striking is the way the quartet's members bring the *Grimes*-waiting-in-the-wings figurations of the First Quartet captivatingly to life, yet it is the vein of rich humanity they uncover in the elusive Third Quartet that really sets the seal on this classic reissue. ★★★★★

COURTESY COLLINS CLASSICS/ALTO

January round-up

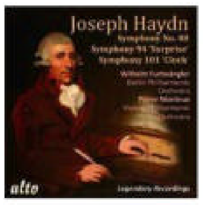
Boasting immaculate production values from the Biddulph team and exemplary annotations from Tully Potter, Felix Salmond's *Complete Columbia Recordings*, recorded 1926-30, sound as pristine here as it is possible to imagine. Salmond's noble restraint (especially for the period), aristocratic poise and tonal allure show why he became such a revered and influential teacher. He was not a big personality player in the Feuermann or Piatigorsky mould (as witness his refreshingly inexplosive approach to the Beethoven A major and Grieg Sonatas), yet what strikes one most throughout the 25 shorter pieces here is Salmond's gloriously in-depth, soulful cantabile. *(Biddulph 8 5009-2)* ★★★★

Calibrating intonation exactly between the clarinet and string instruments is notoriously difficult, yet in a delectable 2007 coupling of the *Brahms and Mozart Clarinet Quintets* from the Scharoun Ensemble Berlin, such problems would appear not to exist. These remarkable players produce an entrancing sonority and float golden phrases as if suspended in a dream-like state. Some might prefer the more enhanced emotional suppleness of Gervase de Peyer with the Melos Ensemble (Mozart, EMI), and Thea King and the Gabrieli Quartet (Brahms, Hyperion), but for sheer beauty of sound, the Berliners are simply unbeatable. *(Tudor TUD7137)* ★★★★

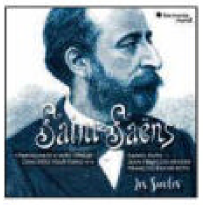


Ginette Neveu was a violinist phenomenon. A child prodigy, she went on to make a series of acclaimed recordings, but her career was cut tragically short when she was killed in an air crash shortly after her 30th birthday. These expert transfers by Paul Arden-Taylor feature her intensely poetic and emotionally penetrating 1945 account of the *Sibelius Concerto*, alongside a series of shorter items recorded the following year with Neveu's brother Jean (who also died in the crash), highlighted by a ravishing account of Ravel's Tzigane. *(Parnassus PACL95006)* ★★★★

Ideas as to how Haydn should be performed have changed radically since this disc featuring *Symphonies Nos 88, 94 & 101* was recorded. Mind you, a 1959 coupling of Nos 94 and 101 featuring Pierre Monteux (a youthful 84 at the time) and the Vienna Philharmonic, still sounds affectionately radiant and full of bonhomie, despite the occasional slight instability, generally relaxed tempos and gently cushioned articulation. By comparison, Wilhelm Furtwängler's 1952 account of No. 88 with the Berlin Philharmonic feels a tad heavy-handed and inflexible in places. Better disciplined and structurally focussed, perhaps, but somewhat lacking in charm. *(Alto ALC1439)* ★★★



Eagle-eyed YouTubers may have spotted an amazing piece of footage featuring the finale of Saint-Saëns's *Organ Symphony* conducted by François-Xavier Roth with Les Siècles in 2010, shot entirely in the organ loft of Saint-Sulpice Paris, where Roth's father Daniel plays the magnificent 1862 Cavaillé-Coll organ. Now the entire performance has been reissued on CD, a truly one-off spectacle in which the organ's presence in that famous finale is felt as in virtually no other recording. Also included is an equally compelling account of the Fourth Piano Concerto, recorded the previous year at the Opéra-Comique, with Jean-François Heisser playing a wonderful 1874 Érard piano *(Harmonia Mundi HMM905348)* ★★★★



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Brief notes

Our selection this month includes Myths, Unsung Heroes and a little Sondheim

Asger Baden If the Music Stops They'll Eat Him Up
Asger Baden (piano, electronics)
Neue Meister 0302077NM

There's a delicious ambiguity about this solo effort from the Danish composer-pianist. It's a rich and complex soundworld of piano, percussive effects, strings and synths but with an improvisational quality. Baden paints with sound, and the pictures are immersive and sometimes unsettling. (MB) ★★★

Bartók Violin Sonatas etc
Franziska Pietsch (violin), Maki Hayashida (piano)
Odradek ODRCD419

Pietsch and Hayashida are uncompromising in their approach to the pair of sonatas. The works' jagged edges and silken curves are expertly navigated, while the shorter folk dances afford the listener several moments of unmitigated pleasure. (MB) ★★★★

Bowen • Coleridge-Taylor • Hinton Chamber Works
Tippett Quartet et al
Dutton Epoch CDLX7386

There's a dazzling sheen to both the recording and performance of these British chamber works. I'll always love the lilting *Larghetto* of Coleridge-Taylor's Piano Quintet in G minor, but it's a real treat to discover Arthur Hinton and his own colourful Piano Quintet. Bowen's *Phantasie* positively fizzes. (MB) ★★★★★

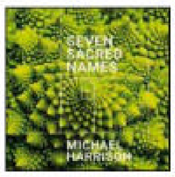
E Coates London Suite etc
Slovak National Symphony
Naxos 8.555178

Okay, this is a reissue of a 1992 recording but it's too good not to share here. The orchestra brings just the right amount of fun and flair to these familiar works by one of Britain's light music heroes. The *London Suite* is just the tip of an enjoyable iceberg. (MB) ★★★★

Gesualdo Dolcissima mia vita – Madrigals
Collegium Vocale Gent/ Philippe Herreweghe *PHI LPH036*

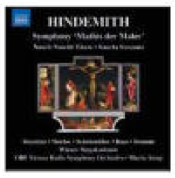
These one-to-a-part performances are perfect for navigating the gnarly dissonances and extreme expression of Italy's controversial Renaissance great, as emotions run from ecstasy to deepest pain. (JP) ★★★★★

Michael Harrison Seven Sacred Names
Roomful of Teeth et al
Cantaloupe CA21157



This single, hour-long work by Michael Harrison is ethereal, embedded in a knotty, Indian soundworld. Designed as a companion to *Nature's Hidden Dimension*, a book by astrophysicist WHS Gebel, the work is made up of complex rhythmic patterns. (FP) ★★★★

Hindemith Symphony 'Mathis der Maler' etc
ORF Vienna Radio Symphony Orchestra/Marin Alsop
Naxos 8.574283



Hindemith's reputation as a soulless, functional operator is belied by the three works here, which are, in turns, witty (*Das Nusch-Nuschi*), eerily unsettling (*Sancta Susanna*) and dramatic (Symphony 'Mathis der Maler'). All are performed with admirable flair and passion by Alsop and her Viennese forces. (JP) ★★★★

Ivanovs Symphonies Nos 15 & 16
Latvian National Symphony Orchestra
SKANI LMIC126

Edgy, angst-ridden, occasionally a little sinister and often enthralling, the Latvian Janis Ivanovs's soundworld in these symphonies is not a million miles away from that of his contemporary Shostakovich. Well worth exploring. (JP) ★★★★

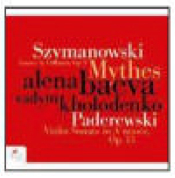
Glen Gabriel Jansson Norse Mythology Various Artists
Audio Network ANW3521

This is a calling card for Jansson's talents as an orchestral storyteller and ought to get him plenty more offers of work in movies. Broad orchestral strokes and hearty choir are brought together in impressive style, and the melodies are good. (MB) ★★★

Medtner • Rachmaninov • Tchaikovsky Piano Works
Nikolay Medvedev (piano)
Quartz QTZ2143

There's something wonderfully unshowy about Medvedev's performance here, despite the glittering quality of such works as Tchaikovsky's Grand Sonata in G major. Other pianists might be tempted to showboat, but this is a pianist with poise and precision. (MB) ★★★★

Paderewski • Szymanowski Violin Sonatas
Alena Baeva (violin), Vadym Kholodenko (piano)
Frederick Chopin Institute NIFCCD075



There's plenty of brilliant discoveries here by Szymanowski and Paderewski, particularly the latter's Violin Sonata in A minor. It's played with great virtuosity and confidence, qualities which are occasionally missing from the rest of the programme. (FP) ★★★

Pratté Grand Concert for harp and orchestra
Delphine Constantin-Reznik (harp) et al *BIS BIS-2570*

A formidably talented harpist, Antoine Edouard Pratté was the toast of Swedish music circles in the mid-19th century. Deftly played and recorded in superb sound, this concerto plus two solo works make a fine introduction to his compositions. (JP) ★★★★

Sondheim A Little Night Music – Suite (arr. Eric Stern)
Opus Two
Bridge BR4010

Short but very sweet, this suite by Eric Stern based on Sondheim's classic musical is a winner. Opus Two – aka violinist William Terwilliger and pianist Andrew Cooperstock – have a ball with the familiar tunes, which are perfectly suited to this intimate chamber setting. (MB) ★★★★

Stamitz Four Symphonies
Kölner Akademie
CPO 555 3442

For an overall impression of Stamitz's style here, think of Haydn in one of his feistier moods. The real star of this album, though, is the *Le jour variable* Symphony, which is like an earthier forerunner of Beethoven's *Pastoral*. (JP) ★★★★

Crossroads Works by Previn, Schemmer et al
Aleksey Semenenko (violin), Artem Belogurov (piano)
BIS BIS-2545

As well as a violin sonata by André Previn, BBC New Generation Artist Aleksey Semenenko and his duo partner present premiere recordings of jazz-influenced sonatas written in the 1980s. The Schemmer is a particularly joyful discovery. (FP) ★★★

Labyrinths Works by Max Richter et al
Orchestra of the Swan
Signum Classics SIGCD694

Following on from its debut album *Timelapse*, the Orchestra of the Swan presents a wildly eclectic programme, which makes for an exciting listen. While some of the ensemble playing could be tighter, the solos are ethereal and thoughtful. (FP) ★★★

Of All Joys
Works by Dowland, Gibbons, Arvo Pärt, Philip Glass et al
Attacca Quartet
Sony Classical 19439936062

The new release from the Brooklyn four-piece places Philip Glass's String Quartet No. 3 at the centre, alongside works by Pärt, Allegri and Gibbons. Despite some lapses in tuning and cohesion, it's the well-considered programme that carries this album. (FP) ★★★

Paganiniana
Works by Paganini, Schnittke, Kreisler, Milstein et al
Pavel Šporcl (violin)
Hänssler HC20069

The works featured on this recording are either by Paganini himself or have been written in tribute to the great virtuoso. Despite an unforgiving acoustic, Šporcl delivers a bold, dynamic performance. Plenty to enjoy here. (FP) ★★★★

Vision / Unsung Heroine
Works by Bingen, D'Aurenga, Ventadorn, Rudel et al
The Telling
First Hand Records FHR123

Vision and *Unsung Heroine* were concertplay films released by The Telling in 2020, the soundtracks of which are heard here. Both are austere, serene and highly evocative, telling the stories of Hildegard von Bingen and Comtessa de Dia, a 13th-century female troubadour. (FP) ★★★★

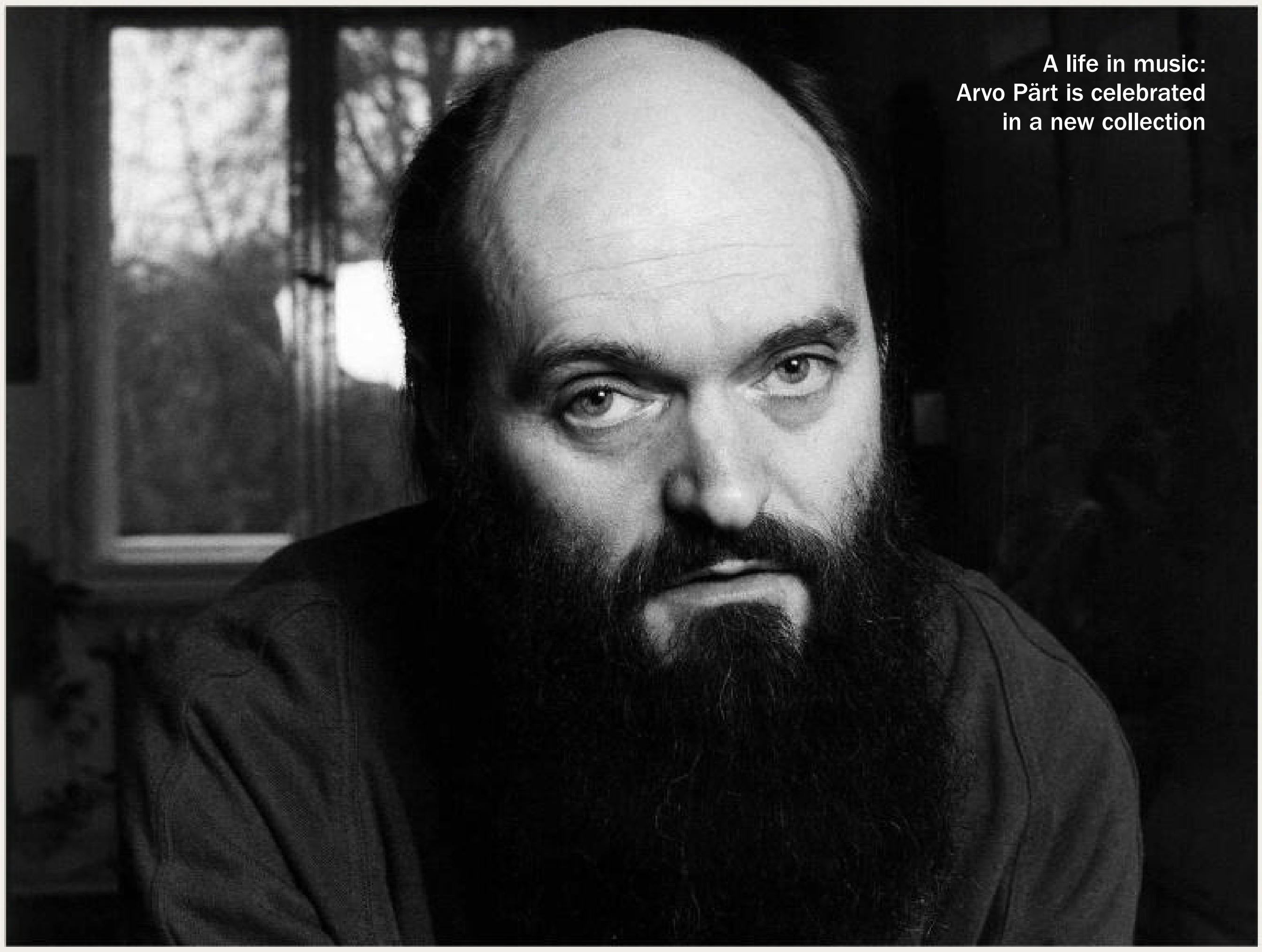
Wonderful World
Works by Fauré, Strauss, Gershwin et al
Christian-Pierre La Marca (cello) et al; Orchestre de Paris
Naïve V7362

Whether in Fauré and Saint-Saëns or Gershwin and Einaudi, much of La Marca's recital has the feel of a laid-back soirée in the company of musical chums. Knottier moments such as Turkish composer Fazil Say's *Four Cities* provide a welcome change of pace. (JP) ★★★

Reviewers: *Michael Beek* **(MB),** *Freya Parr* **(FP),** *Jeremy Pound* **(JP)**

GETTY

The month in box-sets



A life in music: Arvo Pärt is celebrated in a new collection

Composer portraits and a violin king

This month's round-up also includes Chopin recordings by Fou Ts'ong

Released to mark Malcolm Arnold's centenary, ***Complete Symphonies and Dances*** *(Naxos 8.506041)* brings together stellar recordings made in Ireland and Australia in 1995 and 2000. The nine symphonies, recorded by the National Symphony Orchestra of Ireland and Andrew Penny, were previously released together for Arnold's 80th birthday and are reissued here with a bonus disc of Dances – performed by the Queensland Symphony. Presented across six discs, it's a collection that showcases the orchestral prowess of the composer.

Another composer is celebrated in ***Arvo Pärt – The Collection*** *(Brilliant 96389)*, an immersive nine-disc set which presents the Estonian composer's biggest hits and a handful of less familiar pieces. Choral works dominate the collection, with appearances from Leeds Cathedral Choir and the Elora Festival Singers, among others, performing big-boned works like the Stabat Mater and *Berlin Mass*. Fans of *Fratres* will enjoy seven different arrangements, including a version for cello octet. A great portrait of the man and his music.

Ruggiero Ricci – Complete Decca Recordings *(Eloquence 484 2150)* brings together the virtuoso violinist's British recordings for the first time. Across 20 discs, each featuring wonderful original sleeve artwork, the set features the first complete recording of Paganini's Caprices, made in 1950, and takes listeners through orchestral and chamber works recorded 1950-74. Further highlights include Tchaikovsky orchestral works, conducted by Ernest Ansermet and Anatole Fistoulari, and a first appearance on disc of Ricci's Brahms sonatas with pianist Julius Katchen.

> Fans of Arvo Pärt's *Fratres* will enjoy seven different arrangements

With ***Fou Ts'ong plays Chopin*** *(Sony Classical 19439913092)*, the label marks the anniversary of the pianist's passing. This ten-disc collection is comprised of recordings made for CBS Masterworks in the late 1970s and mid-'80s, and features the complete Ballades, Nocturnes, Etudes, Preludes and Mazurkas. Though he was an artist with a broad repertoire at his fingertips, Fou Ts'ong had a deep affinity for the music of Chopin and, as such, these are some of his very finest performances.

Jazz

Roger Thomas reveals must-hear recordings, new, live and from way back when

JAZZ CHOICE

A Classic Conversation

Great British bandleader Graham Collier's no-nonsense style shines in this 1970s gem

Abstract logic: Harry Beckett and Graham Collier create a range of moods

GRAHAME LEMAN, ROAR VESTAD

Graham Collier

British Conversations

Harry Beckett (trumpet), Ed Speight (guitar); Swedish Radio Jazz Group/Graham Collier

My Only Desire MOD004CD

Composer, bandleader, educator and writer Graham Collier was and remains one of the most significant contributors to the development of British jazz, although his purposeful approach tended to keep him out of such limelight as the music is afforded. When I quizzed him on this at one point during the 1980s he simply smiled, mentioned some recent projects and then revealed his appointment as the founding director of the then new jazz course at the Royal Academy of Music. 'I'm happy!' he concluded with cheery conviction. The same sense of here-and-now engagement was always present in his work and certainly applies to this spaciously recorded 1975 Swedish radio commission. Encompassing a range of moods and styles with a no-nonsense modernist tilt, this five-movement suite (Collier always worked best on a large canvas) draws some remarkable work from his soloists as it flows between energetic drive and abstract, almost capricious sections that nonetheless never lose sight of their own logic. Wonderful listening and an invaluable document. ★★★★★

January round-up

Following on from the current Jazz Choice, buried treasures are something of a theme this month.

Composer ***Peter Wiegold***'s unclassifiable ensemble Notes Inégales actually recorded the Miles Davis homage ***Envoi*** with trumpeter Torbjörn Hultmark in 2011, so presumably it's now seeing some well-deserved daylight as a result of the group's recent online EFG London Jazz Festival appearance. Based on short scores fleshed out with directed improvisation, comparing this work to John Zorn's game pieces or the conductions of Butch Morris is to praise rather than to bury some fearlessly in-the-moment music that charts its own course across a wide emotional range under Wiegold's assured guidance, with Hultmark excelling throughout. *(Club Inégales CI002)* ★★★★★

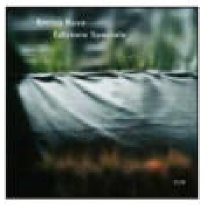
Newly signed to Blue Note, drummer/producer ***Makaya McCraven*** has been doing some digging of his own on ***Deciphering the Message***. These particular finds are classics from the label's back catalogue, including tracks by Art Blakey, Dexter Gordon, Clifford Brown and many others,

sampled, looped, remixed and augmented by live contributions from McCraven and half a dozen of his musical associates. This kind of cut-and-paste production (J Dilla's name is inevitably checked in the accompanying comments) may alarm traditionalists, but there's more to this approach than hipster fodder; with solo fragments turned into riffs and vice-versa it constantly redirects the listener's attention in ways which range from the baffling to the revelatory. *(Blue Note 3814472)* ★★★★

Excavating historical live recordings just because they exist isn't necessarily a rewarding undertaking, but happily a label such as ECM knows better. ***Once Upon a Time: Live in Avignon*** is a 1984 solo recital from bassist ***Eberhard Weber***, documenting a typically concentrated and

compelling performance that's all the more worthy of preservation given that health issues caused him to retire from live work in 2007. Each piece is executed with the serpentine grace that renders his style so recognisable and although the ECM studio sound has served him perfectly over the years, this live recording from Avignon's Théâtre des Halles provides the kind of space that allows the music to assert itself in quite different ways. Very satisfying. *(ECM 2699)* ★★★★★

Veteran trumpet maestro ***Enrico Rava*** also has a new live offering on ECM. ***Edizione Speciale*** sees him convening a group of young



Italian musicians (effectively an expansion of his quartet) to perform a selection of his works alongside a couple of other arrangements. Recorded in Antwerp in 2019, the album as a whole provides a fine concentration of both Rava's energy and that of the assembled musicians, who tackle the whole project with both exuberance and discipline. *(ECM 2672)* ★★★★

Last but by no means least, anyone who can harness deceptively mainstream jazz singing/songwriting skills to create

a song cycle on the theme of insomnia deserves attention, so in absolute contrast to all of the above you might like to direct yours to ***Nishla Smith*** and her trumpet-plus-rhythm-section band. Her striking album/art book/video performance concept ***Friends with Monsters*** combines the whimsical, the poignant and the slightly sinister in a unique way. *(Whirlwind WR4780)* ★★★★

TAKE FIVE

An interview with today's finest jazz musicians

Branching out: Marius Neset takes his sax to the orchestra

This month: Marius Neset

With an expansive and varied discography and an impressive list of live performance associates that ranges from Django Bates to the London Sinfonietta, the distinctive sound of Norwegian Marius Neset's saxophone runs the gamut from bouncing energy to lyrical pastoralism.

As a composer, his work recently took yet another turn with *Manmade*, a piece that gives its name to a set of orchestral compositions released on Chandos. He explains: 'Some years ago I was asked to do a commission for the Bergen Philharmonic Orchestra, which was to be a saxophone concerto with me as the soloist. That was premiered in 2020, the day before everything shut down! It was a great success and I was then asked to compose some more music for the orchestra.'

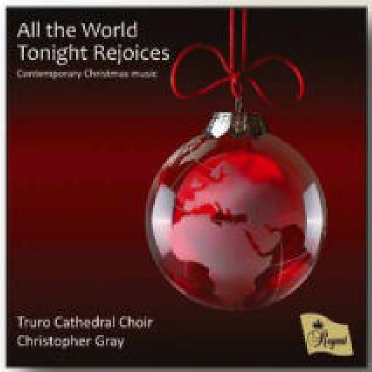
> 'I didn't want the orchestra to just sound like a rhythm section...'

So how does he address the process of orchestral composition? 'I've been composing for large ensembles for the past ten years or so and I've done several projects with the London Sinfonietta. It needs a totally different approach. When composing for jazz musicians I always hear the drums in my head (I started out as a drummer) and what I've always found interesting is to take all the rhythmic tensions and subdivisions you find in a drum part and placing them in different areas within the orchestra, which I think works really well. It makes the music really rhythmic and very lively, but not in such a way that you miss the presence of a drummer.

'I'm fundamentally an improviser, so I've orchestrated around a lot of saxophone lines that were originally improvised, including a kind of duet with the violins. It made that section sound more like a concerto than a jazz improvisation, yet it still has that kind of energy in it.'

One approach to this kind of music involves bringing a jazz band onstage as well as orchestral resources, but for this project Neset was keen to avoid this: 'I didn't want the orchestra to just sound like a rhythm section, but to use all those instruments as they were meant to be used.' ***Roger Thomas***

REGENT RELEASES



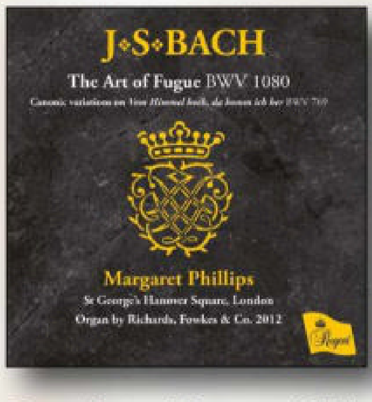
ALL THE WORLD TONIGHT REJOICES

Contemporary Christmas music

The Choir of Truro Cathedral directed by Christopher Gray, Andrew Wyatt (organ)

REGCD560

Since the first 'Nine Lessons & Carols' took place at Truro Cathedral on Christmas Eve 1880, the service has been an annual highlight, with the now firmly established tradition of premiering a newly-commissioned carol each year. Several Truro commissions are featured on this disc. Music by Richard Allain, Judith Bingham, Alexander Campkin, Neil Cox, Gabriel Jackson, Sasha Johnson Manning, Becky McGlade, Helen Paish, Russell Pascoe, Julian Philips, Richard Shephard, Peter Tranchell, Judith Weir and James Whitbourn.



J.S. BACH: THE ART OF FUGUE BWV 1080

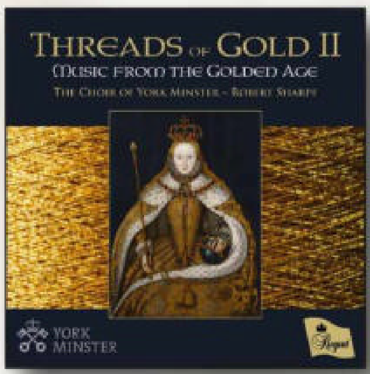
Canonic variations on *Vom Himmel hoch* BWV 769

Margaret Phillips plays the Richards, Fowkes & Co. organ of St George's Hanover Square

2-CD set REGCD558

Completing Margaret Phillips' highly acclaimed series of Bach's organ works.

Margaret Phillips will be marking this release with a launch recital on Thursday 25 November at 6pm at St George's Hanover Square, London



THREADS OF GOLD II

Music from the Golden Age

The Choir of York Minster
Benjamin Morris (organ)
directed by Robert Sharpe

REGCD544

A second 'Threads of Gold' disc tracing the development of sacred choral works from immediately before the reign of Queen Elizabeth I to the early Jacobean period. There are Latin polyphonic motets, concise a cappella anthems in both Latin and English, and elaborate verse anthems with extensive solos and organ accompaniment.

'Everything about this disc is distinguished, and it cannot be praised too highly.' Early Music Review, August 2021

'The resonant acoustic does not obscure the individual lines, nor the carefully enunciated text, and the subtle use of varied dynamics serves to shape the mass of sound.' ★★★★ BBC Music Magazine November 2021

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Books

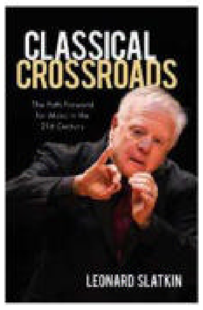
Our critics cast their eyes over this month's selection of books on classical music

Classical Crossroads – The Path Forward for Music in the 21st Century

Leonard Slatkin

Rowman & Littlefield 256pp (hb) ***£22.20***

Now in his late 70s and – after a couple of heart scares – gradually winding down from a distinguished



conducting career mainly on the US orchestral circuit, Leonard Slatkin offers us a mixture of reminiscences and practical suggestions drawn from his professional life. They are gathered into chapters under such headings as, 'On Conducting', 'On Agents', 'On Soloists', 'On Media', 'On Audiences' and so on. The writing is genial; much of the advice is common-sensical. But we are rather kept waiting for the hopeful vision of the musical future promised by the book's subtitle.

It never comes. The final third of the book comprises a sequence of blogs from 2020 in which he ponders the implications for concert life of the Covid pandemic. But apart from reiterating that things must change and suggesting that orchestras should socially distance – which they have been doing anyway – it turns out he has little more idea than the rest of how musical life might be revived post-pandemic. And beyond listing a few of his favourite works, there is no suggestion of the kind of future music he would like to hear.

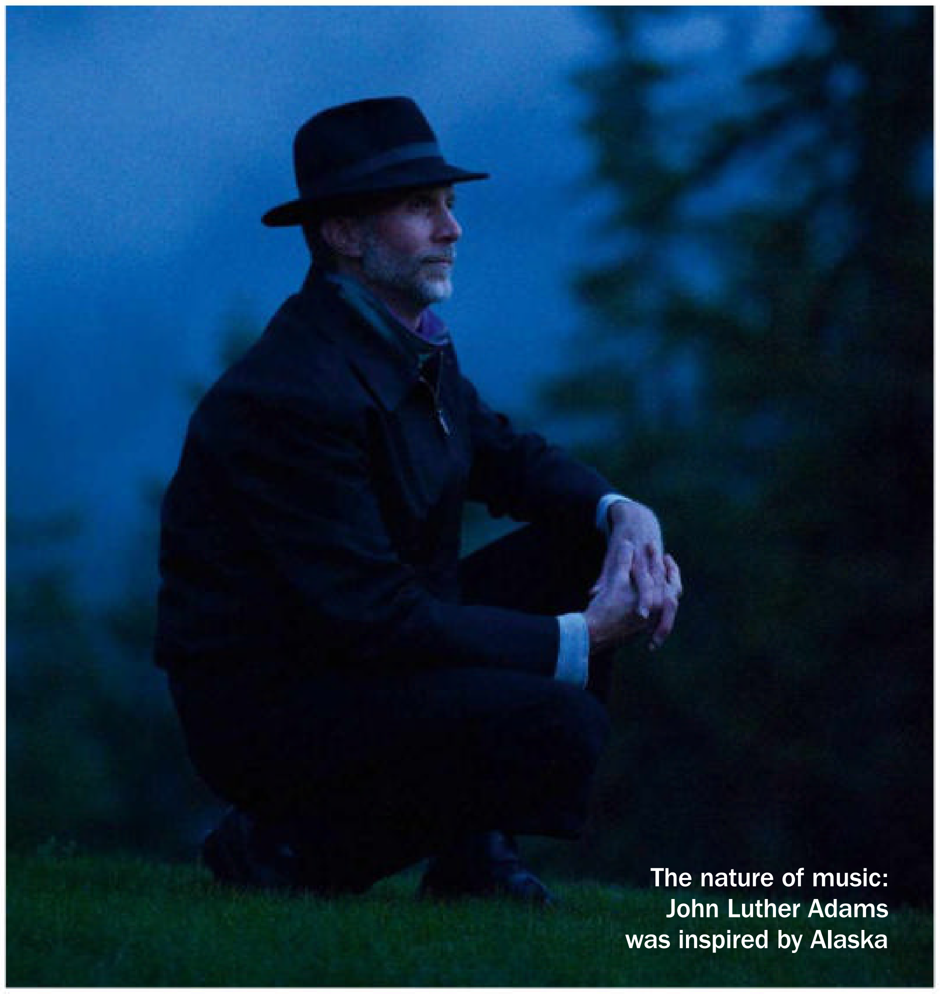
Bayan Northcott ★★★

Silences So Deep – Music, Solitude, Alaska

John Luther Adams

Picador 208pp (pb) ***£12.39***

It's difficult to imagine the existence of John Luther Adams's extraordinary music without the 'silences so deep' he encountered over 30 years living in Alaska. Yet this beautifully written, disarmingly frank memoir is as much about community as it is about the solitude, music and closeness to the earth he explored

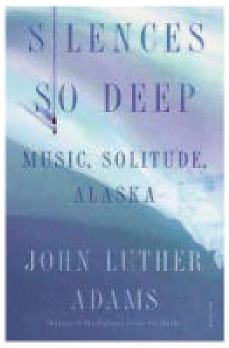


The nature of music: John Luther Adams was inspired by Alaska

DONALD LEE

from 'my own Walden – a rough cabin in the boreal forest.'

The title quotes Alaskan poet John Haines who, alongside conductor Gordon Wright and



Adams's wife Cynthia, were crucial among fellow outsiders, artists and environmental activists in sustaining Adams as his music evolved from being 'about place' to becoming 'in a real sense … a place of its own.'

From the wood thrush song that 'started it all', via *Iñupiaq* drumming to the ecstatic 'sonic geometry' of *A Strange and Sacred Noise* and the deep, sound-light engagement of *The Place Where You Go to Listen*, Adams strives not just for musical topography, but for a music that 'resonates with the inaudible and the invisible'. It's a powerful, richly human creative journey – for which we too surely owe Alaska thanks.

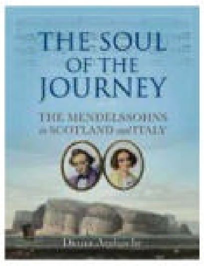
Steph Power ★★★★★

The Soul of the Journey – The Mendelssohns in Scotland an Italy

Diana Ambache

Birlinn 160pp (pb) ***£14.99***

The close relationship between the Mendelssohn siblings, Fanny and Felix, lies at the centre of this attractive exploration – as does, quietly but surely, the equal billing that Diana Ambache accords to both composers. She has homed in



on their travels, which produced a fount of music, paintings and letters; it makes a suitable focal point for an exploration that spotlights such gems as Felix's *Hebrides Overture* and *Scottish* Symphony and Fanny's piano cycle *Das Jahr*. The siblings' personalities come bowling out of the pages, which include a section devoted to some of their letters. Felix overflows with energy and enthusiasm, while Fanny's intelligence, humour and warmth won't entirely surprise those who admire her music.

Occasional editorial infelicities sometimes trip one up – snippets of repeated information within a few pages or a non sequitur here and there – but apart from that, Ambache's writing is clear and well-honed. Beautifully produced and lavishly illustrated, with pictures including sketches and paintings by Felix himself and by Fanny's husband, the artist Wilhelm Hensel, this would make a fine gift.

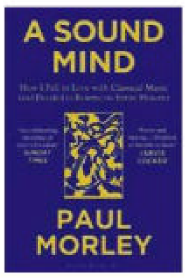
Jessica Duchen ★★★★

A Sound Mind – How I Fell in Love with Classical Music (and Decided to Rewrite its Entire History)

Paul Morley

Bloomsbury 624pp (pb) ***£12.99***

Any book that claims to 'rewrite [classical music's] entire history' is going to have a lot to prove. Does Paul Morley, a former *NME* rock music journalist, writer and producer, succeed? The short answer is no. In fact, inside this



hybrid memoir/music history, he embarks on a slightly different quest, trying to choose the soundtrack to the last moments of his life. And after a midlife conversion to classical music, Morley was having to rethink exactly what that might mean.

And boy, does Morley think a lot. At nearly 600 pages, this narrative could have benefited from a firm edit. Not that it would have been an easy job. Morley's distinctive style relies on digression and circling back, drawing on his enviable roving knowledge of all sorts of subjects. Insight or information overload? Here we have both. Observations about the art, industry, history and aesthetics of classical music were both interesting and infuriating. Morley loves playlists, and these pepper the pages, with a selection of articles, reflections and interviews. Does he find his musical Last Supper? The final word goes to Harrison Birtwistle: 'I've said enough.'

Rebecca Franks ★★★

Audio choice

Chris Haslam chooses the best hi-fi equipment for your classical music listening

THIS MONTH: DESIGNER SPEAKERS

Sound with balls: these small but impressive speakers can fill a room

BEST SMALL STREAMING SPEAKER

Apple HomePod Mini £89

Having sung this speaker's praises in the Christmas issue, I couldn't leave them out of this round up – it's astonishing how something so small can sound so impressive. Available in orange, blue, yellow, black or white, the Mini's full-range downward firing driver projects audio of surprising presence around 360 degrees. Control comes via Apple Siri voice control and AirPlay II, with compatibility for TuneIn, Amazon and Deezer. Spotify and Tidal users can stream using Airplay, and you can create a multi-room set-up, or use two speakers in stereo mode. **apple.com**

An extrovert speaker: the Zeppelin marries power with finesse

BEST ALL-ROUND

Bowers & Wilkins Zeppelin £699

BBC MUSIC MAGAZINE BEST BUY

When it was launched back in 2007, the original Zeppelin iPod dock was the designer speaker of choice, and its bold design and fantastic performance inspired countless audio brands to try something other than boring boxes. Well, the Zeppelin is back, and while there's no iPod dock (or inputs of any sort) the silhouette remains. Inside are five speaker drivers, positioned to give as wide a stereo separation as possible – there's a 150mm subwoofer, two 90mm midrange drivers and a couple of 25mm tweeters, powered by 240 watts of Class D amplification.

Spotify Connect, Apple AirPlay 2 and aptX hi-res Bluetooth are included and the B&W app gives access to streaming services such as Deezer, TIDAL and TuneIn. Alexa Voice control is also included to complete the modern speaker's ticklist.

It's no shrinking violet, but the Zeppelin's showy looks are backed up by a wonderful performance. Befitting such a design, I went bold with my playlist: Verdi, Wagner, Bruckner and the boldest of Beethoven were all handled with a remarkable amount of finesse and control. It's lifelike, nuanced and surprisingly powerful, like any good extrovert should be. **bowerswilkins.com**

BEST MID-PRICED MULTI-ROOM SPEAKER

Audio-Pro C10 MKII £360

The C10 MKII may seem understated next to the Zeppelin (see 'Best Buy'), but it offers great connectivity and impressive sound quality. AirPlay 2, Chromecast and Audio Pro's own Wi-Fi app gives you three multi-room options, while an RCA input means you can add a turntable (with built-in phono stage). It can play Apple Lossless files, AAC, MP3 and FLAC, and the dual 20mm dome tweeters and 13cm woofer make the most of its modern versatility with a wonderful level of detail and timing. **audiopro.com**

NEED TO KNOW

Which features? Bluetooth is the most common connection, and look for version 4.2 or, better still, 5.0 which has wider range and can handle more data. Depending on the streaming services you use, look for Airplay, Chromecast, Alexa and Spotify Connect. But for multi-room streaming and hi-res you'll definitely need Wi-Fi connectivity.

Can I connect anything to them? Some models don't have any ports for connecting a separate CD player or turntable, but if you need to connect peripherals, look for aux and RCA inputs, or HDMI to connect to a TV.

Style over substance? Looks and performance can go hand in hand, if usually at a price – an exception is the HomePod Mini. If you want a one-box system to replace your hi-fi, spend close to what you would on a traditional stereo. If you just need a good-looking spare room speaker, you're spoilt for choice.

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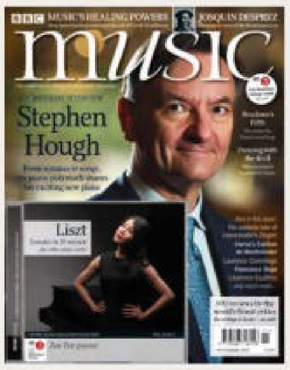
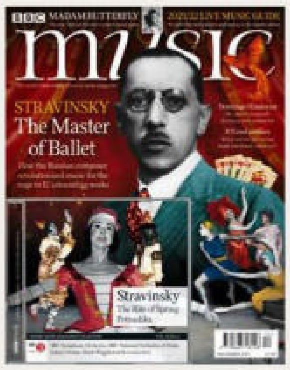


NOVEMBER 2021
Pianist Stephen Hough celebrates his 60th birthday with an exclusive interview; plus Liszt piano works on our cover CD.



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How Stravinsky revolutionised the world of ballet; plus the remarkable double life of music and cricket writer Neville Cardus.

XMAS 2021
We visit the Choir of Worcester Cathedral; plus the King's Singers share the joys of Christmas spent around the world.

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Live choice

Paul Riley picks the month's best concert and opera highlights in the UK

Southampton bound: Chiaroscuro Quartet will play Mozart, Haydn and Beethoven

Scottish Chamber Orchestra
Usher Hall, Edinburgh, 1 January
Web: *sco.org.uk*
It wouldn't be New Year's Day without a sprinkling of seasonal Viennoiserie. But conductor Jiří Rožeň casts his net beyond the Austrian frontier to augment the Strauss family with their namesake, the German Richard Strauss, plus Lehár and Dvořák.

London Symphony Orchestra
Barbican, London, 6 January
Web: *barbican.org.uk*
The LSO under Simon Rattle marks Epiphany with the world premiere of Unsuk Chin's Violin Concerto No. 2 *Scherben der Stille*, played by Leonidas Kavakos, the violinist who inspired the work. Sibelius's Symphony No. 7 and the Suite from Bartók's *The Miraculous Mandarin* complete the concert.

Chiaroscuro Quartet
Turner Sims, Southampton, 9 January
Web: *turnersims.co.uk*
Violinist Alina Ibragimova's period instrument quartet continues its residency with an impeccably 'first Viennese School' threesome. Matthew Hunt is enlisted for Mozart's Clarinet Quintet which separates the fifth of Haydn's Op. 33 string quartets and Beethoven's so-called 'Harp' Quartet No. 10.

BBC National Orchestra of Wales
St David's Hall, Cardiff, 13 January
Web: *stdavidshallcardiff.co.uk*
The second concert of the orchestra's St David's Hall season has Dvořák's Cello Concerto performed by Johannes Moser at its heart. The Serenade No. 1 by Dvořák's friend Brahms makes for an apt coupling, and conductor Jaime Martín (see p106) opens with Kodály's salute to Slovakian folk music, the *Dances of Galánta*.

Royal Northern Sinfonia
Town Hall, Middlesbrough, 13 January
Web: *sagegateshead.com*
Downsizing, the Sinfonia takes to the road with an assortment of sextets for various combinations. Beethoven and Brahms frame the young Britten's Movement for Wind Sextet and, 15 years to the day since it was premiered, Helen Grimes's *Into the Faded Air*.

Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra
Philharmonic Hall, Liverpool, 13 January
Web: *liverpoolphil.com*
From Ravel to Roussel, January ushers in an extended feast of French music, kickstarted by an evening showcasing Philharmonic Hall's newly refurbished organ. Ian Tracey is the soloist in Poulenc's Concerto and, en route to Shostakovich's Symphony No. 9, Lili Boulanger and Lutosławski are on conductor Marta Gardolińska's to-do list.

Noisenight Four
Space 289, Bethnal Green, London, 15 January
Web: *throughthenoise.co.uk*
Cellist Sheku Kanneh-Mason and composer-pianist Harry Baker are the latest recruits to Noisenight's series of barrier-busting events across London's clubs, cabaret bars and converted warehouses. In a club night with a difference, folk songs and jazz provide a fertile arena for improvisation alongside music by JS Bach and Nadia Boulanger.

Danny Driver
Royal Welsh College of Music and Drama, Cardiff, 16 January
Web: *rwcmd.ac.uk*
Characteristically wide-ranging, Danny Driver (see 'Backstage With…', right) gets the 2022 leg of the Steinway International Piano Series off to an eclectic start. Fauré, Debussy, Lili Boulanger and four of Ligeti's Études offset Schumann's hair-raisingly heroic *Études Symphoniques* and Betsy Jolas's *Pièce pour*.

Trio Isimsiz
Queen's Cross Church, Aberdeen, 17 January
Web: *aberdeenperformingarts.com*
For its third visit to Aberdeen, this award-winning Trio balances Brahms's impassioned C major Piano Trio with three 20th-century works: Wolfgang Rihm's *Fremde Szene III*, Takemitsu's *Between Tides* and Shostakovich's heartfelt wartime Trio, Op. 67.

City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra
Symphony Hall Birmingham, 19 January
Web: *cbso.co.uk*
With soprano Fatma Said on hand for Mahler's Symphony No. 4, the CBSO's new chief conductor Kazuki Yamada doesn't pass up the opportunity to explore late Mozart: the concert aria *Vado, ma dove* and, from *La Clemenza di Tito*, 'Non più di fiori'. First up is Don Juan, as exuberantly envisioned by Richard Strauss.

Riot Ensemble
Kings Place, London, 21 January
Web: *kingsplace.co.uk*
Voces 8 and The Swingle Singers are among January's contributors

to the latest edition of Kings Place's 'Unwrapped' series, which unpacks the voice. Some voices, however, are 'hidden' when Riot Ensemble charts a course through the music of Gubaidulina, Clyne and Xenakis plus the premiere of Rufus Isabel Elliot's *Tillage [without violence]*.

Opera North
Grand Theatre, Leeds, from 22 January, and touring
Web: *operanorth.co.uk*
In a new staging by Femi Elufowoju Jr, Verdi's *Rigoletto* features Eric Greene in the title role with Jasmine Habersham as the daughter whose ill-starred infatuation leads to tragedy. Garry Walker conducts.

London Philharmonic Orchestra
Royal Festival Hall, London, 22 January
Web: *lpo.org.uk*
With the Prelude and Liebestod from Wagner's *Tristan und Isolde* and Scriabin's *Poem of Ecstasy*, smouldering sensuality starts and ends conductor Karina Canellakis's concert. In between, Lili Boulanger's *D'un soir triste* sobers the mood and Cédric Tiberghien tackles Ravel's Piano Concerto for the Left Hand.

Sacconi Quartet
St Peter's Church, Canterbury, 22 January
Web: *musicatstpeters.org.uk*
Tippett heard his wartime String Quartet No. 2 the day he was released from Wormwood Scrubs where he'd been imprisoned as a conscientious objector. It's partnered with Fantasies by Purcell and Beethoven's late C sharp minor Quartet Op. 131.

Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment
Queen Elizabeth Hall, London, 23 January
Web: *oae.co.uk*
Written for Neapolitan wedding celebrations in 1708, Handel's *Aci, Galatea e Polifemo* has tended to be overshadowed by his later *Acis and Galatea*. Here, though, it secures an outing as part of the orchestra's 'The Wildness Pleases' season and features Trevor Eliot Bowes as the vocally athletic cyclops.

Total Immersion: Terezin
Barbican, London, 23 January
Web: *barbican.org.uk*
Harnessing the BBC Symphony Orchestra, the BBC Singers and Guildhall Strings, the latest BBC 'Immersion Day' is devoted to the musical world of the Theresienstadt Ghetto where creativity flourished despite the Nazi menace. Works by Schulhoff (see p58) and Krása, among others, are crowned by Viktor Ullmann's chilling satire *Der Kaiser von Atlantis*.

Tallis Scholars
Cadogan Hall, London, 26 January
Web: *cadoganhall.com*
Conductor Peter Phillips's renowned vocal ensemble is 'Inspired by the Sistine Chapel' – by the composers who worked there and the music written for it. Around a composite Mass drawing on Palestrina, and Allegri's site-specific *Miserere*, the Scholars weave together works by Morales, Josquin, Festa and Carpentras.

Ulster Orchestra
Marketplace Theatre, Armagh, 26 January
Web: *ulsterorchestra.org.uk*
Under the direction of its leader Tamás Kocsis, the orchestra navigates a concert-play that prefaces Mozart's genial Concerto for Flute and Harp and Beethoven's Symphony No. 2 with a Sinfonia by the 18th-century Viennese composer, pianist and singer Marianna Martines.

Armonico
St Mary's Collegiate Church, Warwick, 29 January
Web: *armonico.org.uk*
Ranking the Scarlattis in order of renown would surely relegate Francesco to third place behind his brother Alessandro and keyboard-whizz nephew Domenico. Armonico proposes a spot of rehabilitation, setting Francesco's *Dixit Dominus* and Messa beside violin concertos by JS Bach and Vivaldi performed by Rachel Podger.

Royal Opera House
Covent Garden, London, 31 January – 16 February
Web: *roh.org.uk*
Handel's oratorio *Theodora* had its premiere at Covent Garden in 1750 but hasn't been heard there until now – when handsome amends are made with a strong cast including Joyce DiDonato, Julia Bullock, Jakub Józef Orliński and Ed Lyon. Harry Bicket conducts director Katie Mitchell's new staging.

EVA VERMANDEL, KAUPO KIKKAS

BACKSTAGE WITH...
Pianist Danny Driver

Weaving threads: 'A programme needs to be a rich tapestry'

Your solo recital in Cardiff on 16 January is a wonderfully eclectic affair. How did you devise the programme?
For me, a programme needs to be a rich tapestry that is both varied and stimulating for the audience. That means there has to be aesthetic variety, perhaps some interesting relationships between the pieces, and also a sense of trajectory. In this instance, the second half builds very strongly from Lili Boulanger's small, reflective pieces, through the Betsy Jolas piece to Schumann's longer-scale work that has a real drive. Often, my programmes also have something to do with how I am feeling at the time and what else is going on – it all comes together in a kind of soup with many flavours!

You've included works called 'Etudes' by both Schumann and Ligeti. But they're a lot more than piano studies, aren't they?
Absolutely. At the very basic level they are, yes, a technical exercise, but they are equally compositional studies. In the case of the Ligeti, each piece has its own rules, by which a process is set in motion and then you see what happens from there. For instance, in *Galamb Borong*, the first of the four that I am playing, one hand deals with one whole-tone scale collection and the other deals with the other. So, the two hands may be playing a completely different set of pitches and different cross-rhythms too. But on top of that, there's the influence of the gamelan, which is why I've programmed it with Debussy's *Cloches*, which is also inspired by that instrument.

Tell us more about Betsy Jolas's *Pièce Pour*...
Betsy Jolas's father was French and her mother was American – she grew up in both countries and so has had a foot in two continents throughout her whole life. She is now 95 but is still writing! *Pièce Pour* was a commission for a competition at the Paris Conservatoire so is, again, almost like an exercise in the way it engages the fingers and the mind. Jolas studied with Milhaud and Messiaen, and while her music is atonal, she was never a fully paid up member of the avant garde. Earlier in her life, she was connected with singing and Renaissance music in particular, and so there's a strong relationship with the human voice in her music. It has an intensity that really draws you in.

TV&Radio

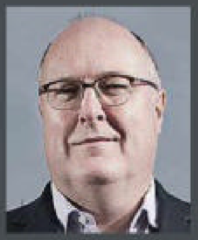
Your complete guide to what's on Radio 3 this month, plus TV highlights

Hands across the water: (clockwise) Terence Blanchard's *Fire Shut Up in My Bones* premieres in New York; conductor Bernard Haitink performs around Europe; Manchester Camerata at Gorton Monastery

JANUARY'S RADIO 3 LISTINGS

Schedules may be subject to alteration. For up-to-date listings see Radio Times

Three to look out for



Alan Davey, the controller of BBC Radio 3, picks out three great moments to tune into this January

Manchester Week

We hand the airwaves over to our Salford production teams for a series of live daily lunchtime concerts from Stoller Hall and five evening concerts from the city's top orchestras.
24-28 January

Fire Shut Up In My Bones

The Metropolitan Opera opened its 2021 season with Terence Blanchard's *Fire Shut Up In My Bones*, the first opera by a black composer to be staged in the company's 138-year history. Starring Will Liverman and Angel Blue, the opera is based on the memoir of *New York Times* journalist Charles M Blow, following his upbringing in poverty-stricken Louisiana in the 1970s, where he endured sexual abuse to become a successful columnist and writer.
Opera on 3: 8 January, 6.30pm

Memories of Bernard Haitink

Following the death of the revered Dutch conductor, Radio 3 reflects on Haitink's long and illustrious career, sharing gems from the BBC and European Broadcasting Union archives throughout the week.
7-14 January

1 SATURDAY

7-9am Breakfast
9-11.45am Record Review
11.45am-12.30pm Music Matters
12.30-1pm This Classical Life
1-3pm Inside Music
3-4pm Sound of Cinema
4-5pm Music Planet
5-6.30pm J to Z
6.30-10pm Opera on 3 from the Aix-en-Provence Festival. Wagner *Tristan und Isolde*. Stuart Skelton (Tristan), Nina Stemme (soprano), Franz-Josef Selig (King Mark), Josef Wagner (Kurwenal), Jamie Barton (Brangäne), Dominic Sedgwick (Melot), Linard Vrielink (Young Sailor/Shepherd), Ivan Thirion (Steersman), Estonian Philharmonic Chamber Choir, London Symphony Orchestra/ Simon Rattle
10pm-12 midnight New Year New Music Radio 3 presenters select their favourite pieces of contemporary music. Choices range from Anna Meredith's electronic nocturne *moonmoons* to a Malian harp melody arranged by Toumani Diabate, via an arrangement of Abba's 'Lay All Your Love on Me' by Caroline Shaw
12 midnight-1am Freeness

2 SUNDAY

7-9am Breakfast
9am-12 noon Sunday Morning
12 noon-1pm Private Passions Meg Rosoff (writer)
1-2pm Lunchtime Concert (rpt)
2-3pm The Early Music Show
3-4pm Choral Evensong (rpt)
4-5pm Jazz Record Requests
5-5.30pm The Listening Service
5.30-6.45pm Words and Music
6.45-7.30pm Sunday Feature Tchaikovsky's trip to visit a Russian Orthodox Monastery
7.30-9pm Drama on 3 Proust Concert (rpt)
9-11pm Record Review Extra
11pm-12am Sunday Series
12-12.30am Classical Fix

3 MONDAY

6.30-9am Breakfast
9am-12 noon Essential Classics
12 noon-1pm Composer of the Week Errollyn Wallen
1-2pm Lunchtime Concert
2-4.30pm Afternoon Concert
4.30-5pm New Generation Artists
5-7pm In Tune
7-7.30pm In Tune Mixtape
7.30-10pm Radio 3 in Concert from Grosses Festspielhaus, Salzburg, Austria. Honegger *Symphony No. 3 'Symphonie Liturgique'*, Brahms *Symphony No. 4*. Vienna Philharmonic/ Herbert Blomstedt
10-10.45pm Music Matters
10.45-11pm The Essay Herb
11pm-12.30am Northern Drift

4 TUESDAY

6.30-9am Breakfast
9am-12 noon Essential Classics
12 noon-1pm Composer of the Week Errollyn Wallen
1-2pm Lunchtime Concert
2-5pm Afternoon Concert
5-7pm In Tune
7-7.30pm In Tune Mixtape
7.30-10pm Radio 3 in Concert A broadcast from the European Broadcasting Union
10-10.45pm Music Matters
10.45-11pm The Essay Herb
11pm-12.30am Night Tracks

5 WEDNESDAY

6.30-9am Breakfast
9am-12 noon Essential Classics
12 noon-1pm Composer of the Week Errollyn Wallen
1-2pm Lunchtime Concert
2-4pm Afternoon Concert
4-5pm Choral Evensong
5-7pm In Tune
7-7.30pm In Tune Mixtape
7.30-10pm Radio 3 in Concert A broadcast from the European Broadcasting Union
10-10.45pm Feature
10.45-11pm The Essay Herb
11pm-12.30am Night Tracks

6 THURSDAY

6.30-9am Breakfast
9am-12 noon Essential Classics
12 noon-1pm Composer of the Week Errollyn Wallen
1-2pm Lunchtime Concert
2-5pm Afternoon Concert
5-7pm In Tune
7-7.30pm In Tune Mixtape
7.30-10.45pm Radio 3 in Concert A broadcast from the European Broadcasting Union
10.45-11pm The Essay Herb
11-11.30pm Night Tracks
11.30pm-12.30am Unclassified

7 FRIDAY

6.30-9am Breakfast
9am-12 noon Essential Classics
12 noon-1pm Composer of the Week Errollyn Wallen
1-2pm Lunchtime Concert
2-5pm Afternoon Concert
5-7pm In Tune
7-7.30pm In Tune Mixtape
CHOICE 7.30-10pm Radio 3 in Concert A concert from 2011. Richard Strauss *Four Last Songs*, *Eine Alpensinfonie*. Anja Harteros (soprano), Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra/ Bernard Haitink
10-10.45pm Feature
10.45-11pm The Essay Herb
11pm-1am Late Junction

8 SATURDAY

7-9am Breakfast
9-11.45am Record Review
11.45am-12.30pm Music Matters
12.30-1pm This Classical Life
1-3pm Inside Music
3-4pm Sound of Cinema
4-5pm Music Planet
5-6.30pm J to Z
CHOICE 6.30-10pm Opera on 3 Terence Blanchard *Fire Shut Up In My Bones*. Angel Blue (Destiny/ Loneliness/Greta), Latonia Moore (Billie), Will Liverman (Charles), Walter Russell III (Char'es-Baby), Orchestra of the Metropolitan Opera/

Yannick Nézet-Séguin
10pm-12 midnight New Music Show
12 midnight-1am Freeness

9 SUNDAY

7-9am Breakfast
9am-12 noon Sunday Morning
12 noon-1pm Private Passions David Nutt (neuropsychopharmacologist, specialising in the research of drugs that affect addiction, anxiety and sleep)
1-2pm Lunchtime Concert (rpt)
2-3pm The Early Music Show
3-4pm Choral Evensong (rpt)
4-5pm Jazz Record Requests
5-5.30pm The Listening Service
5.30-6.45pm Words and Music
6.45-7pm New Generation Thinkers
7-7.30pm Between the Ears Frequency
7.30-9pm Drama on 3
9-11pm Record Review Extra
11pm-12am Sunday Series
12-12.30am Classical Fix

10 MONDAY

6.30-9am Breakfast
9am-12 noon Essential Classics
12 noon-1pm Composer of the Week Lully
1-2pm Lunchtime Concert
2-4.30pm Afternoon Concert
4.30-5pm New Generation Artists
5-7pm In Tune
7-7.30pm In Tune Mixtape
7.30-10pm Radio 3 in Concert A Prom from 2017. Mozart *Symphony No. 38 'Prague'*, *Violin Concerto No. 3*, Schumann *Symphony No. 2*, Mendelssohn *A Midsummer Night's Dream: Scherzo*. Isabel Faust (violin), Chamber Orchestra of Europe/ Bernard Haitink
10-10.45pm Music Matters
10.45-11pm The Essay The Other Side: Modern Art and the Spirit
11pm-12.30am Northern Drift

11 TUESDAY

6.30-9am Breakfast
9am-12noon Essential Classics
12noon-1pm Composer of the Week Lully
1-2pm Lunchtime Concert
2-5pm Afternoon Concert
5-7.30pm In Tune plus Mixtape
7.30-10pm Radio 3 in Concert A concert from 1992. Martinů *Double Concerto for two string orchestras, piano and timpani*, Bartók *Violin Concerto*, Vieuxtemps *Capriccio in C minor 'Hommage à Paganini'*, Dvořák *Symphony No. 7*. Philipp Moll (piano), Henrich Vogler (timpani), Tabea Zimmermann (viola), Berlin Philharmonic Orchestra/Bernard Haitink
10-10.45pm Music Matters
10.45-11pm The Essay The Other Side: Modern Art and the Spirit
11pm-12.30am Night Tracks

12 WEDNESDAY

6.30-9am Breakfast
9am-12noon Essential Classics
12noon-1pm Composer of the Week Lully
1-2pm Lunchtime Concert
2-4pm Afternoon Concert
4-5pm Choral Evensong
5-7.30pm In Tune plus Mixtape
7.30-10pm Radio 3 in Concert A concert from 2017. Mahler *Symphony No. 9*. London Symphony Orchestra/ Bernard Haitink
10-10.45pm Free Thinking
10.45-11pm The Essay The Other Side: Modern Art and the Spirit
11pm-12.30am Night Tracks

13 THURSDAY

6.30-9am Breakfast
9am-12noon Essential Classics
12noon-1pm Composer of the Week Lully
1-2pm Lunchtime Concert
2-5pm Afternoon Concert
5-7.30pm In Tune plus Mixtape
7.30-10pm Radio 3 in Concert A concert from 1997. Schubert *Symphony No. 3*, Shostakovich *Symphony No. 4*. Berlin Philharmonic Orchestra/ Bernard Haitink
10-10.45pm Free Thinking
10.45-11pm The Essay The Other Side: Modern Art and the Spirit
11-11.30pm Night Tracks
11.30pm-12.30am Unclassified

14 FRIDAY

6.30-9am Breakfast
9am-12noon Essential Classics
12noon-1pm Composer of the Week Lully
1-2pm Lunchtime Concert
2-5pm Afternoon Concert
5-7.30pm In Tune plus Mixtape
7.30-10pm Radio 3 in Concert

GETTY

GETTY, ROBIN CLEWLEY, ANDY GOTTS

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New boy in town: Birmingham's chief conductor designate Kazuki Yamada

GETTY

A concert from 2019. Beethoven *Piano Concerto No. 4*, Bruckner *Symphony No. 7*. Emanuel Ax (piano), Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra/Bernard Haitink
10-10.45pm The Verb
10.45-11pm The Essay
11pm-1am Late Junction

15 SATURDAY

7-9am Breakfast
9-11.45am Record Review
11.45am-12.30pm Music Matters
12.30-1pm This Classical Life
1-3pm Inside Music
3-4pm Sound of Cinema
4-5pm Music Planet
5-6.30pm J to Z
6.30-10pm Opera on 3
10pm-12am New Music Show
12-1am Free the Music

16 SUNDAY

7-9am Breakfast
9am-12 noon Sunday Morning
12 noon-1pm Private Passions Stephanie Shirley (entrepeneur)
1-2pm Lunchtime Concert (rpt)
2-3pm The Early Music Show
3-4pm Choral Evensong (rpt)
4-5pm Jazz Record Requests
5-5.30pm The Listening Service
5.30-6.45pm Words and Music
6.45-7pm New Generation Thinkers
7-7.30pm Between the Ears Sound in the Blood
7.30-9pm Drama on 3 Molière
9-11pm Record Review Extra
11pm-12am Sunday Series
12-12.30am Classical Fix

17 MONDAY

6.30-9am Breakfast
9am-12 noon Essential Classics
12 noon-1pm Composer of the Week Liszt
1-2pm Lunchtime Concert
2-4.30pm Afternoon Concert
4.30-5pm New Generation Artists
5-7pm In Tune
7-7.30pm In Tune Mixtape
7.30-10pm Radio 3 in Concert from Grosses Festspielhaus, Salzburg, Austria. Beethoven *Overture: The Creatures of Prometheus, Op. 43*, Brahms *Double Concerto for Violin and Cello*, Franck *Symphony in D minor*. Kian Soltani (cello), Michael Barenboim (cello), West-Eastern Divan Orchestra/ Daniel Barenboim
10-10.45pm Music Matters
10.45-11pm The Essay Tribal Britain
11pm-12.30am Northern Drift

18 TUESDAY

6.30-9am Breakfast
9am-12 noon Essential Classics
12 noon-1pm Composer of the Week Liszt
1-2pm Lunchtime Concert
2-5pm Afternoon Concert
5-7pm In Tune
7-7.30pm In Tune Mixtape
7.30-10pm Radio 3 in Concert from the Barbican, London. Unsuk Chin *Violin Concerto No. 2 'Scherben der Stille' (world premiere)*, Sibelius *Symphony No. 7*, Bartók *Suite: The Miraculous Mandarin*. Leonidas Kavakos (violin), London Symphony Orchestra/ Simon Rattle
10-10.45pm Music Matters
10.45-11pm The Essay Tribal Britain
11pm-12.30am Night Tracks

19 WEDNESDAY

6.30-9am Breakfast
9am-12 noon Essential Classics
12 noon-1pm Composer of the Week Liszt
1-2pm Lunchtime Concert
2-4pm Afternoon Concert
4-5pm Choral Evensong
5-7pm In Tune
7-7.30pm In Tune Mixtape
7.30-10pm Radio 3 in Concert live from Symphony Hall, Birmingham. Richard Strauss *Don Juan*, Mozart *Vadi, ma dove, Non più di fiori*, Mahler *Symphony No. 4*. Fatma Said (soprano), City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra/ Kazuki Yamada
10-10.45pm Free Thinking
10.45-11pm The Essay Tribal Britain
11pm-12.30am Night Tracks

20 THURSDAY

6.30-9am Breakfast
9am-12 noon Essential Classics
12 noon-1pm Composer of the Week Liszt
1-2pm Lunchtime Concert
2-5pm Afternoon Concert
5-7pm In Tune
7-7.30pm In Tune Mixtape
7.30-10pm Radio 3 in Concert from Saffron Hall, Saffron Walden. New Year's Celebration. Debussy arr. Ravel *Danse Tarantelle Styrienne*, Saint-Saëns *Danse macabre*, Fauré *Pavane*, Ravel *Piano Concerto*, Dobrinka Tabakova *Orpheus's Comet*, Lehár *Giuditta: Meine lippen, sie kussen so heiss*, Dvořák *Rusalka: Song to the Moon*, Tchaikovsky *The Nutcracker: Waltz of the Flowers*, Josef Strauss *Sphären-Klänge*, Bernstein *Candide: Glitter and be Gay*, Johann Strauss *The Blue Danube, Champagne Polka*. Soraya Mafi (soprano), BBC Concert Orchestra/Michael Seal
10-10.45pm Free Thinking
10.45-11pm The Essay Tribal Britain
11-11.30pm Night Tracks
11.30pm-12.30am Unclassified

21 FRIDAY

6.30-9am Breakfast
9am-12noon Essential Classics
12noon-1pm Composer of the Week Liszt
1-2pm Lunchtime Concert
2-5pm Afternoon Concert
5-7pm In Tune
7-7.30pm In Tune Mixtape
7.30-10pm Radio 3 in Concert from Bridgewater Hall, Manchester. Betsy Jolas *Letters from Bachville*, Dutilleux *Correspondances*, Copland *Letter from Home*, Dvořák *Symphony No. 9 'From the New World'*. Carolyn Sampson (soprano), BBC Philharmonic/ Ludovic Morlot
10-10.45pm The Verb
10.45-11pm The Essay Tribal Britain
11pm-1am Late Junction

22 SATURDAY

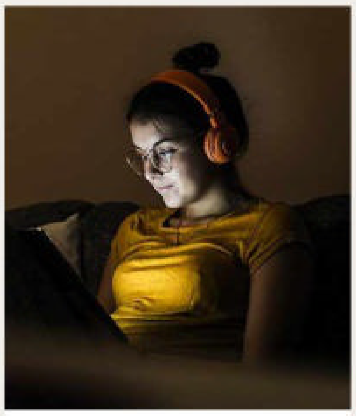
7-9am Breakfast
9-11.45am Record Review
11.45am-12.30pm Music Matters
12.30-1pm This Classical Life
1-3pm Inside Music
3-4pm Sound of Cinema
4-5pm Music Planet
5-6.30pm J to Z
6.30-10pm Opera on 3 from the Metropolitan Opera, New York. Mozart *Le Nozze di Figaro*. Golda Schultz (Countess Almaviva), Lucy Crowe (Susanna), Anna Stéphany (Cherubino), Elizabeth Bishop (Marcellina), Giuseppe Filianoti (Don Basilio), Christian Gerhaher (Count Almaviva), Ryan McKinny (Figaro), Maurizio Muraro (Dr Bartolo), Orchestra of the Metropolitan Opera/ Yannick Nézet-Séguin
10pm-12 midnight New Music Show
12 midnight-1am Free the Music

23 SUNDAY

7-9am Breakfast
9am-12 noon Sunday Morning
12 noon-1pm Private Passions Katherine Parkinson (actor)
1-2pm Lunchtime Concert (rpt)
2-3pm The Early Music Show
3-4pm Choral Evensong (rpt)
4-5pm Jazz Record Requests
5-5.30pm The Listening Service
5.30-6.45pm Words and Music
6.45-7.30pm Sunday Feature Yiddish Glory. Exploring Jewish music in the Muslim countries of Central Asia
7.30-9pm Drama on 3 Wunderkind. A drama exploring Leopold Mozart, while he is in Rome with his son Wolfgang, who is 14 years old. Wolfgang notates *Miserere* after just one listen
9-11pm Record Review Extra
11pm-12am Sunday Series
12-12.30am Classical Fix

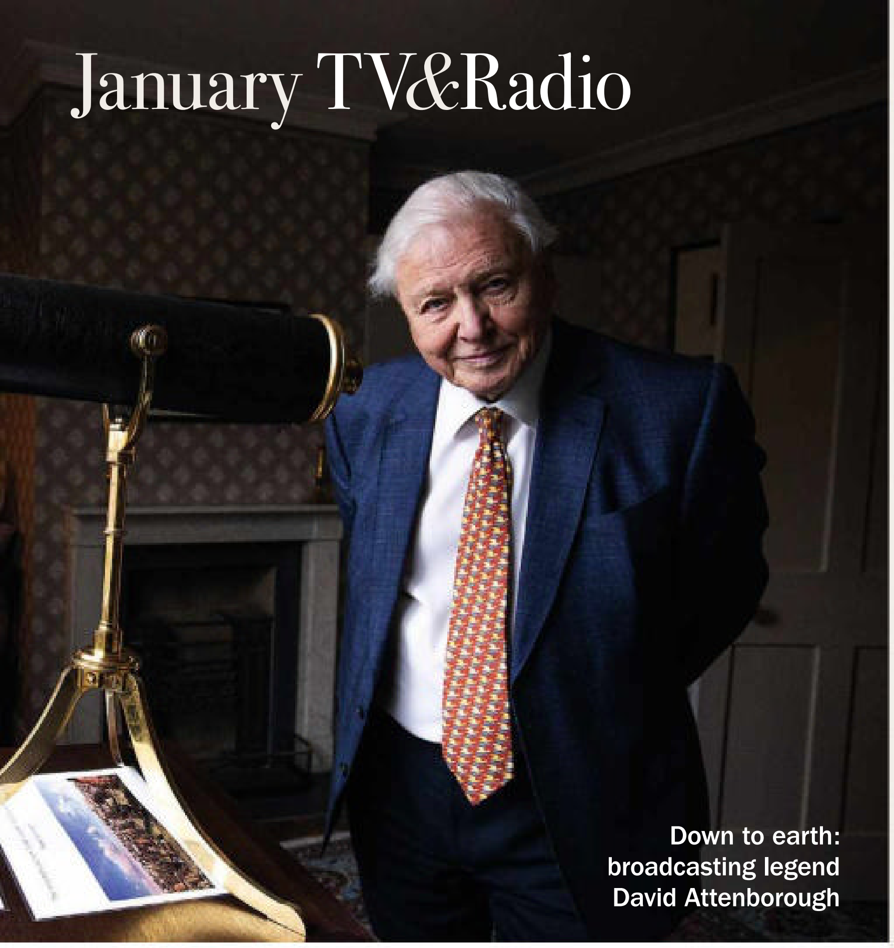
24 MONDAY

6.30-9am Breakfast
9am-12noon Essential Classics
12noon-1pm Composer of the Week Marianna Martines
1-2pm Lunchtime Concert live from Wigmore Hall, London
2-4.30pm Afternoon Concert
4.30-5pm New Generation Artists
5-7pm In Tune
7-7.30pm In Tune Mixtape
CHOICE 7.30-10pm Radio 3 in Concert from Salford. Mozart in Motion. Mozart *Sinfonia Concertante in E flat, Piano Concerto No. 9, Symphony*



BBC Sounds
The Sleeping Forecast

Any insomniacs will be familiar with the sounds of the shipping forecast on the radio in the small hours of the morning. BBC Sounds has taken this one step further, creating a series of mixes which bring together relaxing instrumental soundtracks by BBC Music Introducing artists and extracts from Radio 4's *Shipping Forecast*. *Find The Sleeping Forecast on BBC Sounds*



Down to earth: broadcasting legend David Attenborough

TV CHOICE
David Attenborough's Wonder of Song

Although this magazine is usually dedicated to the sounds of the concert hall or recording studio, this month we join David Attenborough to explore the music of the natural world.

Attenborough will travel from the bird-filled forests of Australia to the depths of a humpback whale home in the South Pacific to hear the animal orchestras that fill our world with noise. He will meet the world's top sound recordists to explore their archives of recordings made during his 95-year lifetime, with songs by lemurs, whales and lyrebirds. He will also hear which landscapes have now fallen silent, due to human's influence.

Birds are the singers we think we know the most about, but Attenborough will explain that everything that underpins what we know about birdsong might be wrong, as scientists discover more about the complexities of female birds' voices.
BBC One: date and time tbc

No. 41. Jean Efflam-Bavouzet (piano), Alexander Sitkovetsky (violin), Timothy Ridout (viola), Manchester Camerata
10-10.45pm Music Matters
10.45-11pm The Essay
Tribal Britain
11pm-12.30am Northern Drift

25 TUESDAY
6.30-9am Breakfast
9am-12noon Essential Classics
12noon-1pm Composer of the Week Marianna Martines
1-2pm Lunchtime Concert live from Stoller Hall, Manchester. Pavel Kolesnikov (piano)
2-5pm Afternoon Concert
5-7.30pm In Tune plus Mixtape
7.30-10pm Radio 3 in Concert from the White Hotel, Salford. Bryce Dessner *Aheym*, Dobrinka Tabakova *Insight*, Ben Nobuto *Serenity 2.0*, Michael Gordon *Industry*, Sebastian Gainsborough *Squint (world premiere)*. Manchester Collective
10-10.45pm Music Matters
10.45-11pm The Essay
Tribal Britain
11pm-12.30am Night Tracks

26 WEDNESDAY
6.30-9am Breakfast
9am-12noon Essential Classics
12noon-1pm Composer of the Week Marianna Martines
1-2pm Lunchtime Concert live from Stoller Hall, Manchester. Alessandro Fisher (tenor), Kunal Lahiry (piano)
2-4pm Afternoon Concert
4-5pm Choral Evensong
5-7.30pm In Tune plus Mixtape
7.30-10pm Radio 3 in Concert from Stoller Hall, Manchester. Grieg *Holberg Suite*, Finzi *Romance*, Elgar *Serenade for Strings*, Shostakovich *Sonata for violin, percussion and string orchestra*. Chloë Hanslip (violin), Northern Chamber Orchestra
10-10.45pm Free Thinking
10.45-11pm The Essay
Tribal Britain
11pm-12.30am Night Tracks

27 THURSDAY
6.30-9am Breakfast
9am-12noon Essential Classics
12noon-1pm Composer of the Week Marianna Martines
1-2pm Lunchtime Concert live from Stoller Hall, Manchester. Mithras Trio
2-5pm Afternoon Concert
5-7.30pm In Tune plus Mixtape
7.30-10pm Radio 3 in Concert from Media City, Salford. Schmidt *Notre Dame: Prelude to Act I, Intermezzo and Carnival Music*, Walton *Cello Concerto*, Dvořák *Symphony No. 8*. Guy Johnston (cello), BBC Philharmonic/Vassily Sinaisky
10-10.45pm Free Thinking
10.45-11pm The Essay
Tribal Britain
11-11.30pm Night Tracks
11.30pm-12.30am Unclassified

28 FRIDAY
6.30-9am Breakfast
9am-12noon Essential Classics
12noon-1pm Composer of the Week Marianna Martines
1-2pm Lunchtime Concert live from Stoller Hall, Manchester
2-5pm Afternoon Concert
5-7pm In Tune
7-7.30pm In Tune Mixtape
7.30-10pm Radio 3 in Concert from Bridgewater Hall, Manchester. Mahler *Symphony No. 2 'Resurrection'*. Anne Schwanewilms (soprano), Alice Coote (mezzo-soprano), Hallé Orchestra/Mark Elder
10-10.45pm The Verb
10.45-11pm The Essay
Tribal Britain
11pm-1am Late Junction

Stoller star: violinist Chloë Hanslip heads to Manchester

29 SATURDAY
7-9am Breakfast
9-11.45am Record Review
11.45am-12.30pm Music Matters
12.30-1pm This Classical Life
1-3pm Inside Music
3-4pm Sound of Cinema
4-5pm Music Planet
5-6.30pm J to Z
6.30-10pm Opera on 3 from the Metropolitan Opera, New York. Puccini *La bohème*. Anita Hartig (Mimì), Federica Lombardi (Musetta), Charles Castronovo (Rodolfo), Artur Ruciński (Marcello), Alexandre Birch Elliott (Schaunard), Nicholas Brownlee (Colline), Donald Maxwell (Benoit/Alcindoro), Orchestra of the Metropolitan Opera/Eun Sun Kim
10pm-12 midnight New Music Show
12 midnight-1am Free the Music

30 SUNDAY
7-9am Breakfast
9am-12 noon Sunday Morning
12 noon-1pm Private Passions Sydney Kentridge (lawyer, judge)
1-2pm Lunchtime Concert (rpt)
2-3pm The Early Music Show
3-4.30pm Choral Evensong
4.30-5.30pm Jazz Record Requests
5.30-6.45pm Words and Music
6.45-7.30pm Sunday Feature All in a Day's Work
7.30-9pm Drama on 3
9-11pm Record Review Extra
11pm-12am Sunday Series
12-12.30am Classical Fix

31 MONDAY
6.30-9am Breakfast
9am-12noon Essential Classics
12noon-1pm Composer of the Week Elgar
1-5pm See Monday 24 January
5-7.30pm In Tune plus Mixtape
7.30-10pm Radio 3 in Concert
10-10.45pm Music Matters
10.45-11pm The Essay Reading Ulysses
11pm-12.30am Northern Drift

QUIZ ANSWERS from p104
1. Beethoven's 'Eroica' Symphony No. 3
2. a) Bellini's *Norma*; b) Purcell's *Dido and Aeneas*; c) Verdi's *Rigoletto*; d) Mozart's *Marriage of Figaro*
3. Richard Strauss
4. 40 (five choirs of eight voices each)
5. 1905
6. Nikolai Rimsky-Korsakov
7. They are all well-known organ builders
8. Benjamin Britten; 22 November 1963
9. Playing near the bridge
10. They all played/used to play the trombone

KAUPO KIKKAS, GETTY

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ABTA
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THE QUIZ

It's time to put your classical music knowledge to the test...

1. Which well-known symphony, premiered in April 1805, was originally called 'Bonaparte' by its composer?

2. In which operas do the following famous arias appear: a) 'Casta Diva'; b) 'When I am laid in earth'; c) 'La donna è mobile'; d) 'Porgi, amor'?

3. Whom did the German soprano Pauline de Ahna marry on 10 September 1894?

4. Composed in around 1570, Tallis's *Spem in alium* is written for how many vocal parts?

5. Which year saw the premieres of Mahler's *Kindertotenlieder* (January), Elgar's *Introduction and Allegro* (March), Debussy's *La Mer* (October) and Richard Strauss's *Salomé* (December)?

6. And in that same year, which composer was sacked from his post at the St Petersburg Conservatoire for supporting students who demanded reforms?

7. Aristide Cavaillé-Coll, Johannes Klais and Henry Willis are all famous for what?

8. The day on which President John F Kennedy was assassinated coincided with the 50th birthday of which leading composer? And what was the date?

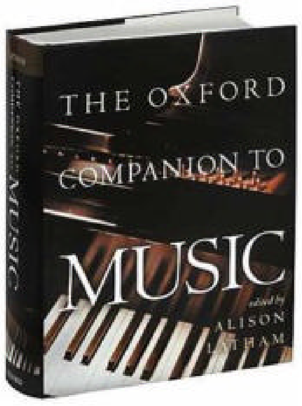
9. If a violinist is playing 'sul ponticello', what are they doing?

10. Which instrument links composer Gustav Holst, Olympic gold-winning heptathlete Jessica Ennis-Hill (pictured above) and 'Douglas' from the 1990s Lurpak commercials on British TV?

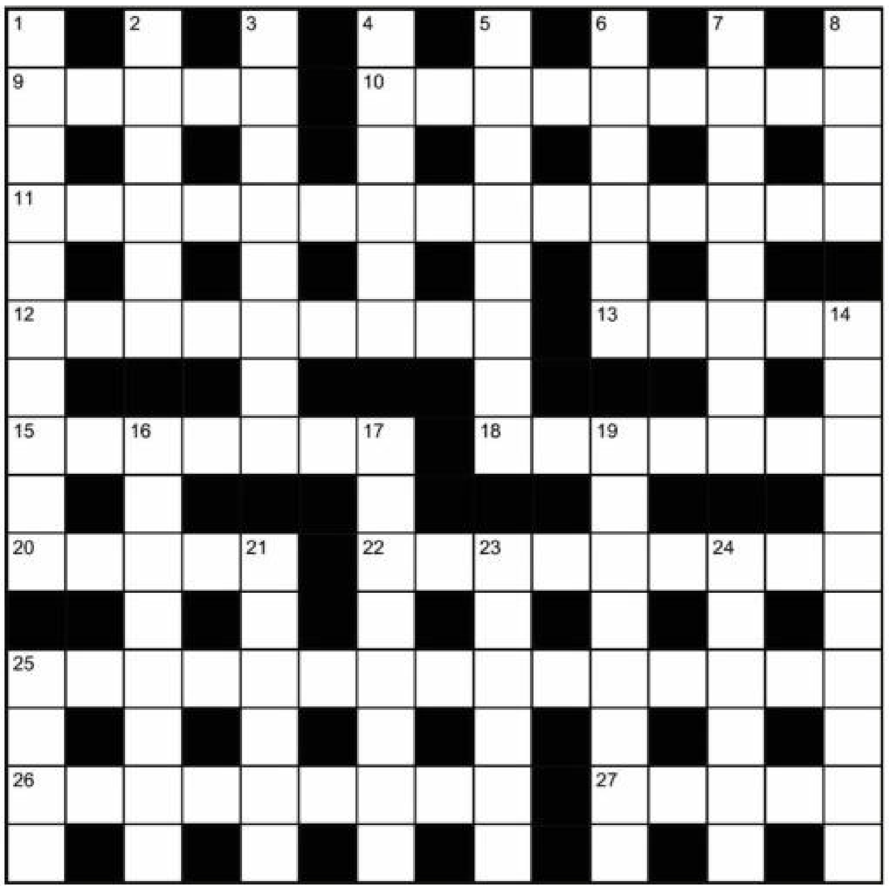
See p102 for answers

The *BBC Music Magazine* PRIZE CROSSWORD NO. 368

Crossword set by **Paul Henderson**



The first correct solution of our crossword picked at random will win a copy of **The Oxford Companion to Music.** A runner-up will win **The Psychology of Music: A Very Short Introduction** by Elizabeth Hellmuth Margulis (see oup.co.uk). Send answers to: *BBC Music Magazine*, Crossword 368/Jan, PO Box 501, Leicester, LE94 0AA to arrive by 20 Jan 2022 (solution in Apr 2022 issue).



Your name & address ....

ACROSS

9 A piano expert offering *allegro*? (5)
10 Observed one with maximum energy backing Associated Board candidates? (9)
11 Possibly mutely choosing to accept nothing in cultural study (15)
12 Those people back *King and I* – business gets operetta (3,6)
13 Band retains source of mega successful recording (5)
15 Working to block unimaginative augmented fourth (7)
18 Diminished major music award, dismissing my pointed comment? (7)
20 Swedish mezzo in fur? (5)
22 Surpasses overture from Ireland or overture from Stenhammar (9)
25 Instrument classification scheme: instrument supervisor mostly reassigned the class (10-5)
26 Sour fellow to keep preserving form of fugue? (4,5)
27 Pianist arrives with a ukulele initially (5)

DOWN

1 Part in Offenbach? Part touted in error (10)
2 European keeping quiet over hard Strauss opera (6)
3 Male voice new in make-up of one trio (8)
4 In France I picked up entertainment with a Janácek opera (6)
5 Opening of piece, perhaps, capturing it for male singer (8)
6 Children beginning to sing, following sort of key (6)
7 Sophisticated edition taken up by bass, broadcasting (8)
8 Observe limits to effortless playability (4)
14 Husband queues excitedly to take in widely appealing music – a caprice? (10)
16 Pause in concerts I note shifting later? Very into that (8)
17 Unruffled boy's good in church music (8)
19 European pop star is agile, dancing with last of fans (8)
21 Implore Beckmesser to conceal ancient viol? (6)
23 Piano pedagogue with hesitation linking Czech Republic and New York (6)
24 Sustains piece by Riley using repeated sequences, primarily (6)
25 Hired performer has reduced terminations of music work (4)

NOVEMBER SOLUTION
No. 365

NOVEMBER WINNER
Hugh Cullen, Loanhead

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GETTY, DARIO ACOSTA

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Music that changed me

Jaime Martín

Conductor

Jaime Martín had a stellar career as a flautist for over two decades before becoming principal conductor of the Gävle Symphony Orchestra in Sweden in 2013. Now music director of the Los Angeles Chamber Orchestra and chief conductor of the RTÉ National Symphony in Dublin, in February he becomes Melbourne Symphony Orchestra's chief conductor. Also active as a guest conductor, on 13 & 14 January he conducts the BBC National Orchestra of Wales in Cardiff and Swansea.

My music-loving father took me to my first concert in my home town, Santander, when I was eight. Until that moment I didn't care about music, but when the opening clarinet sounds of TCHAIKOVSKY's Fifth Symphony started, I had tears in my eyes. I can't explain why, but that's what happened. After the concert I said to my father that I wanted to play the violin. I soon realised that to learn the violin I needed private lessons, but I'm the oldest in a family of six brothers and sisters, we lived in a 65m^2 flat and I couldn't ask my parents to pay for music lessons. Instead I learned the flute for free at the municipal wind band. Later, I studied at the Conservatory in Madrid and every Thursday I had to take the overnight train to get to my lesson on Friday morning.

In 1985 I went to The Hague to continue my studies with Paul Verhey, principal flute of the Concertgebouw Orchestra. At that time the Hague Conservatory was at the centre of Baroque music in Europe and the teachers were Frans Brüggen, Gustav Leonhardt, the Kuijken Brothers... it was amazing. Discovering these new and different sounds was very important for me as a musician – at the Conservatory I felt almost embarrassed to be playing a modern instrument. I've since realised that what matters is the software – what you do with the music – not the hardware! Ton Koopman and the Amsterdam Baroque's recording of JS BACH's Orchestral Suites was at the very centre of that discovery.

In 1987 I became a member of the European Community Youth Orchestra, where I met my wife Rachel Gough, now principal bassoon with the LSO. My first project was SCHOENBERG's *Gurrelieder* conducted by Claudio Abbado, with Jessye Norman, Brigitte Fassbaender, George Grey and Philip Langridge as soloists. For a 21 year-old, to be part of this at the Berlin Philharmonie was amazing. *Gurrelieder* will always be very close to my heart.

When Nikolaus Harnoncourt and the Chamber Orchestra of Europe's recording of BEETHOVEN's Symphonies appeared in 1991, it was a revelation. We all realised that it was possible to apply what we had learned from original instruments to performances with 'modern' instruments. These recordings made a big impression on the way I understood music. A few years later, I was incredibly fortunate to became the principal flute of the Chamber Orchestra of Europe. I worked with Harnoncourt in the COE for more than 15 years, one of the highlights of my life!

Bernard Haitink's recording of DEBUSSY's *Trois Nocturnes* with the Concertgebouw has always been part of my life. I love the music, but I particularly love the way it's been recorded: the orchestra's sound, the acoustic of that amazing hall, Haitink's shaping of this music... this is a CD for sound hedonists! I always loved Haitink's approach to music and the calm he produced with all the musicians working with him.

I had dreams of being a conductor – I had taken classes at the Conservatory – but when I met Abbado in 1987 I realised that if I gave up the flute then, I would never be conducted by him or other wonderful conductors. So I put everything into my performance, and I'm happy I did that. I moved to London and played as principal flute in orchestras including the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra, Academy of St Martin in the Fields and the London Philharmonic. It wasn't until nine years ago that I became a full-time conductor. I had learnt so much from playing in orchestras and from working with amazing conductors and I made the jump when it was the right time for me.

Interview by Amanda Holloway

The choices

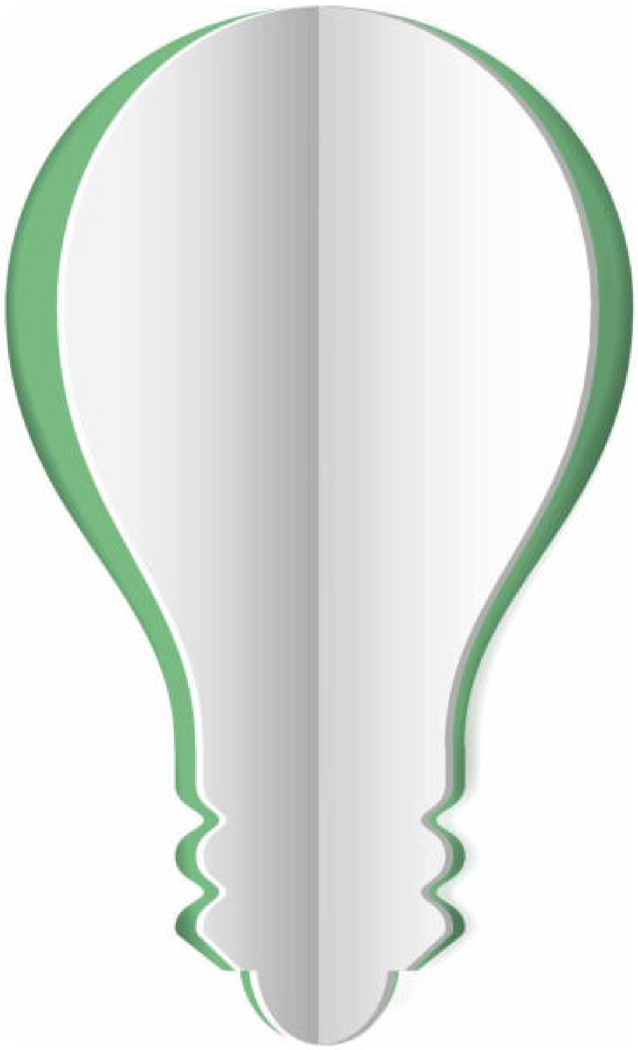
Tchaikovsky Symphony No. 5
Berlin Philharmonic/Herbert von Karajan
Deutsche Grammophon 479 6495

JS Bach Orchestral Suites
Amsterdam Baroque/Ton Koopman
Deutsche Harmonia Mundi RD 77864

Schoenberg Gurrelieder
Vienna Philharmonic/Claudio Abbado
Deutsche Grammophon 439 9442

Beethoven Complete Symphonies
Chamber Orchestra of Europe/Nikolaus Harnoncourt *Teldec 0927497682*

Debussy Trois Nocturnes
Concertgebouw Orchestra/Bernard Haitink
Philips 478 4796



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